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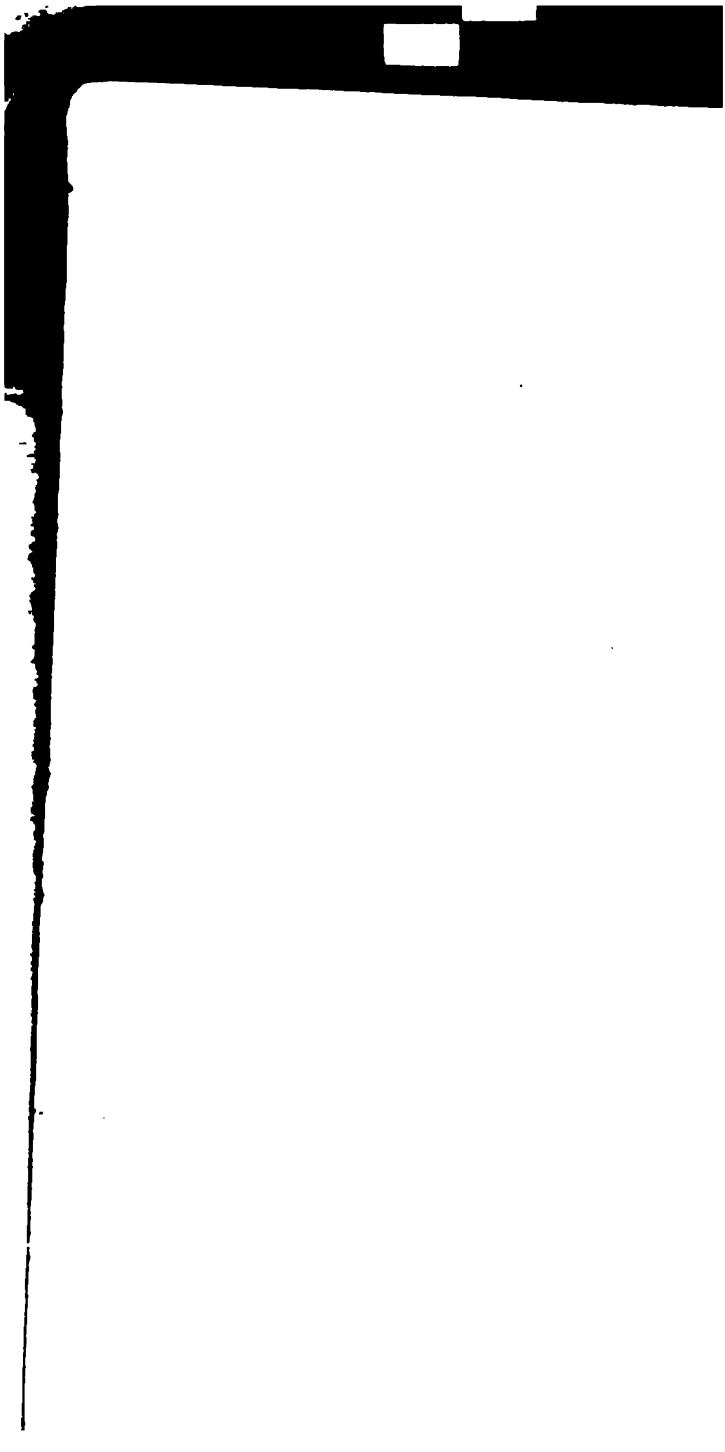

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	In Which the Furness Boy Rides by . .	3
II	Zandrie of the Convent	15
III	Zandrie Learns Her Pater Noster . . .	28
IV	Julian Learns Something too	41
V	Dealing with Treachery	52
VI	Explaining how Bobolinks may Come to be Among Ravens	62
VII	Chiefly at Our Lady's	68
VIII	When Bobolinks Fly North	78
IX	Containing a Moment of Suspense . . .	94
X	The Man in the Chair	99
XI	Morning	119
XII	Afternoon	135
XIII	Night	146
XIV	The Passing of the Nuns	152
XV	The Lyndes and a Doctor	170
XVI	An Agreement	180
XVII	The First Sunday in June	193
XVIII	The Northwest Wind	206
XIX	Showing which had the Stronger Will .	220
XX	The Twins	229

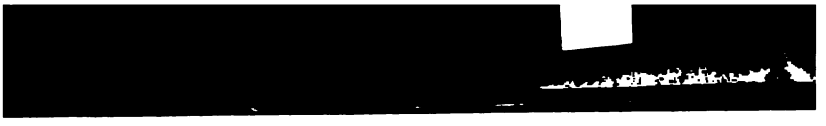
CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXI	ZANDRIE MAKES A PROMISE	238
XXII	THE ROAD	247
XXIII	ZANDRIE OF THE WORLD	261
XXIV	CONTAINING LAWYER'S ADVICE	272
XXV	IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH	284
XXVI	INTERRUPTED	294
XXVII	CONTAINING PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE	301
XXVIII	SHORT BECAUSE HURRIED	314
XXIX	IN THE HOUR OF NEED	322
XXX	"NO PAST IS MINE; NO FUTURE"	333
XXXI	THE LAST JOUST	345
XXXII	THE WHITE PLUME	362
XXXIII	THE GARDEN OF LOST DELIGHT	373
XXXIV	WHO MAY BE GARDENERS OF PARADISE	381



ZANDRIE





ZANDRIE

CHAPTER I

IN WHICH THE FURNESS BOY RIDES BY

"The soul of the Furness Boy ought to be chastened," Mrs. Deming announced in the midst of hemming a garment for The Poor; and the Ladies' Aid regarded the remark as an almost supernatural phenomenon. For although she had made it before, neither she nor the other ladies had mentioned the Furness Boy in months, and they had been discussing a rule for pickled apples. And the Boy himself was supposed to be in Paris. Yet the words were scarcely out of Mrs. Deming's mouth, when there he was, galloping past the parsonage on his ill-famed sorrel Toper, at the old outrageous speed.

Mrs. Summers was the only one who reached the window in time to identify his back. But she had identified it, so she said, quite beyond question. Whereupon question felt itself challenged.

How could she identify any one a thou away?

She *could n't,* as Mrs. Deming pointed this, the Deming parsonage, was Paris. obviously was not.

Though the rider had disappeared around t the ladies put on their long distance gl leaned out of the window.

"It sounded like the Furness Boy," said M ing's unmarried sister.

"It *could n't* have," said Mrs. Deming "He 's in Paris. A dreadful place for a yc I always told my son George —"

But the other ladies were asking rhetorica another, who else had ever clattered over t stones of Marshall street at that lawless spe cept the Boy's own grandfather, Colonel and he was dead? And they recalled that how the Boy had sounded on horseback alr childhood — a clatter of hoofs like a runaw ing in upon a nap, a chat, or a game of w zando,— always a crash of noise without a crescendo.

Well, the rest of them might think v pleased and say it too, but Mrs. Summers his back; and for all that it was January, h cap, and she *saw his hair.* The sun was on

But the day was cloudy!



However, the evidence was buttressed by that very slip, as Mrs. Deming's sister showed, since the characteristic of the Furness Boy's hair was that it always shone as golden almost as though the sun were on it.

"His mother's hair," said Mrs. Deming darkly.

"Cut, I hope," her sister amended. But the flippancy was ignored, because the ladies were now mourning the absence of Mrs. Fish, whose husband was the Furness Boy's guardian and ought to know not only whether the Boy had come home, but why.

"My son George ought to know." But Mrs. Deming blushed the moment she said this; for the intimacy of her son and the Furness Boy was something to which she seldom called attention — and no wonder, in view of the scandal involved! "George is kind to everybody," she added.

But her sister spared her not. "George is a dear, good boy, we all know. But *is* it charity of heart when a boy borrows twenty-five dollars of another, to bet on him in a horse race, and wins fifty? Of course I don't know how it got doubled that way, but it somehow does at races, does n't it?"

"My son George did n't *borrow* it, my dear! — Julian Furness lent it of his own accord, to bet on himself and Toper,— he was so perfectly sure of winning. A very arrogant young man."

Mrs. Deming's sister suggested that the charity was on Julian's part. Whereupon the ladies charged her,

in chorus, with always taking the Furness Boy's side.

"To be sure, he has no business to look so like an angel," she said.

The chorus denied that he did — except in color. But the Marshalls all had the same misleading complexion. Even his grandfather, Colonel Julian Marshall, known to congenial spirits as Colonel "Jehu" — even he had had innocent blue eyes, and innocent golden hair till it turned still more innocent cream-white; and he had been a godless old reprobate, every one knew. He had given Toper to Julian the younger, though the horse was the best mount in his stud, and the agile old gentleman still rode in the running races, and rode to win. And it was not the only evidence either, that his grandson was the apple of his eye. He had left him ninety thousand in his will, for instance. The Ladies' Aid, recalling these facts, agreed that the enthusiastic regard of Colonel Jehu for young Julian, argued community of soul.

And of course being the offspring of Marjorie Marshall could not be to any one's credit. And the Furness Boy was her son.

"How Wilton Furness could marry that woman —!" The Society scarcely ever finished its sentences on the subject of Marjorie Marshall; and if young persons were in the room, it lowered its voice. For, three years after marrying Mr. Furness, when their son Julian was two years old, she eloped with a navy officer.

"Of course it 's not nice to run away with Captain Roswells when you 're married already,"— Mrs. Deming's sister said it quite aloud —"especially when you married on a wager. Still, it 's so much a matter of bringing up! Of course *we 'd* have had to kill ourselves in her place."

"MYRA!" the chorus shouted,— though with decorum.

"I mean, if we 'd found ourselves married to Wilton Furness," said Miss Myra. "Myself, I 'd just as soon espouse the ice-chest."

"Wilton Furness was the best parishioner Mr. Deming ever had," said Mrs. Deming.

"Just the trouble! — too good to live with! . . . I take it that Captain Roswell is n't. I wonder now, how he and Marjorie *do* get on together?"

But Mrs. Deming considered Marjorie Marshall and the Captain not a nice subject of conversation. "Though of course," she said, "they 're married *now;*" and the ladies agreed that that made all the difference. Mrs. Deming's sister added that she thought it frightful of Wilton Furness not to have divorced his wife —"frightfully dog-in-the-manger-ish,— or the other animal concerned in the manger business,— *mulish,* you know."

"It was a horse," said Mrs. Deming with dignity; and then agreed with the Society that it was unbecoming to criticise a parishioner now in his grave, — whose life, too, had been such a living death.

Poor Mr. Wilton Furness! — never a merry soul at best! After his wife's defection, he had moved out to an estate two miles from town and allowed never a woman to cross his dishonored threshold. And although his son Julian was with him, yet he lived there to all intents alone; for what time the Boy was not on horseback or wriggling in his seat at school, he was making music. And Mr. Wilton Furness had no ear, nor even a liking for music. So one can imagine the evenings there,— the father shut off in some ell with his documents and cigars, desperately patient with the strains that trespassed through the keyhole,— the son in his vault of a drawing-room, playing out his unchastened soul to undusted walls.

Julian played well, every one owned. Even when he refused to cross the church threshold except as organist and choir-master, the committee agreed that he played better than the musician already installed. "Of course. That's why I offered," he is said to have said. But the committee shook their heads regretfully; and Mr. Wilton Furness had to come to church from that time forth alone. Even at Gray Summer's party, where Julian conducted himself so outrageously, he had played divinely. Oh, but how he behaved first!

It was an old-fashioned party to which both c and young were asked, but of course Mr. Wilton Fu ness had not accepted. His son had, though, perh

not knowing that Mrs. Summers had all but decided not to invite him! "And you see I was right!" she said. For her daughter Gray, finding herself somehow alone with him, reproved him for his Sabbath backsliding; and he bent with such gracious heed and a smile so beguiling, that she even asked a promise of reform. To which, "Bless your heart!" he had answered, "you 're a right dear little rascal,"— she was seventeen —"and I 'll promise — solemnly — to kiss you." Perhaps Dr. Summers was to blame for Julian's keeping his word that very evening. Perhaps the Furness Boy would have done it anyway. But at all events, the Doctor himself set an egg on the floor in a corner, defied the decorous company to break that egg with a peck measure, and promised with a mighty laugh, that whoever succeeded should kiss the prettiest girl in the room. Any one who has studied the subject of peck measures, corners, and eggs, knows that Gray had reason to feel secure. Yet upon the laughter and confusion came a crash, and lo! — one blow of the Furness Boy's heel had annihilated both measure and egg. And then, without apology for the debris, serenely heedless of denunciation, he took his reward. If he had blushed even ever so slightly . . . But he laughed instead; and at sight of the grotesque havoc in the corner, he laughed again. And Gray declared that she HATED him. And all this after his playing the Moonlight Sonata even to the



moving of Mrs. Deming! It was then that she first uttered her famous dictum that his spirit needed to be chastened.

Perhaps it did, if those who knew his mother, Marjorie Marshall, were right in recognizing his spirit as hers.

When the Ladies' Aid took up the question of who taught him to play the organ, suspicion pounced upon a Russian with preposterously long white whiskers, who conducted a riotous — or certainly Bohemian — existence over the music store. Mrs. Fish said that he was an exile — a nihilist, and had thrown bombs at something or somebody somewhere — she hoped it was in Russia. And although — or perhaps because — she always said things positively, she was believed. And Mrs. Deming was believed when she reported platoons of horrid bottles parading the nihilist's window sills; she had seen them from her dressmaker's back windows. But when asked if their conten were really spirituous, she retorted that she was a connoisseur. Heaven knows she was not! Julian's organ teacher, whatever he was or did, tainly abetted the boy in his lawless ways, for he learned to play during hours that he ought to spent on Greek. His schoolmaster said so.

When he was graduating from school in h teenth year, his father died, and the Ladies' A cussing the effects of sudden death, began to a change of heart. Mrs. Fish had said posit

he was going to do what his father wished, and go to college, using the old Marshall house on Marshall street as his headquarters during vacation. The plan seemed both respectable and sane, and Mrs. Deming's sister began to speak of him as Mr. Julian Furness. There was something in his mien, she said, that imposed respect — something subtler than six feet of superb physique clad in black, or the assured poise of his head. And even when he rode a steeple-chase ten days after his father's funeral, the ladies made excuses and agreed it was early yet for a thorough change of heart. But two weeks later, news had smitten the Society, that caused it to throw up its hands in a full half-minute's silence, and then audibly to abandon hope of the Furness Boy. For, the Furness estate was sold to a Roman Catholic sisterhood; the Marshall house, leased to Jews; and the Boy himself, in the thrall of the nihilist, was bound for — Paris.

Yes, it was true. The Jews moved into the house on Marshall street — opposite the Deming parsonage. The nuns began to fortify the Furness estate with a high cement wall, to metamorphose the Furness house into a retreat house, and to lay foundations for their convent and chapel. And as for the graceless heir who had sold his birthright — Well, Mrs. Deming herself saw the nihilist on his way to the railroad station; saw his pace that was fairly a cavort; saw a portmanteau — bulging with who knew what? — in either hand, and a fur cap pulled down to his eyes, though

the day was a scorcher; saw his whiskers streaming out behind like flags of a false truce; and she saw the son of Marjorie Marshall striding in shameless fealty at his heels. Oh, it was all true.

As for Julian's career in Paris, what should the Ladies' Aid know of that? But it surmised. And at last George Deming graduated from college, became engaged to Gray Summers, and went to Paris to study at the Sorbonne; and a letter to Gray reported of his townsman as follows: "Furness is here,— one of the most joyous spirits of this *Quartier,* to which neither of us belong by rights, but I 'll explain about that later. I found him playing a card game that my dear little Gray would call mighty wicked, for oh, oh! he had a pile of money in front of him! It was in a wicked little café too, and you ought to have seen the chaps he 'd been playing with! — such villainous black beards! Well, up he jumped, and was for sitting down with me at another table and forgetting all about that naughty pile of money till his bearded friends reminded him. Do you know, I 'm afraid he really is a rather wild duck now. I reckon our ways won't cross much, for I 'm in this glorious old village for work." Et cetera, very impressive.

But he was mistaken about the crossing of way
In a letter to his brother, for instance — which G
never saw till after becoming Mrs. George — he
scribed another meeting. It was again in a café

late in the evening,— very late. And this time Julian was absorbing the attention of a lady of the minor opera, whose popularity was at its giddy zenith. Though her cigarette had gone out, Julian's had not,— a detail that George found significant. Among her satellites revolving at a prudent distance was a " thread of an Italian, whose extraordinary bitterness of smile and capacity for wine interested me," wrote the chronicler, " till of a sudden he tiptoed up behind the girl, and with the dark request to take that home to her maman, poured a glassful of claret over her shoulders. He himself fell — not gently — on the table. But Furness wrapped the girl in her cloak very quietly, and took her to the street, where he dispatched her in a cab. When he came back, the Italian had been whisked out of sight, but some one called ' We 'll catch him for your breakfast; ' and Furness's remarks as he stood there in the doorway, were as picturesque as his appearance, which I wanted to paint, if only for the public to help me decide whether it was more diabolical or avenging-angelical. After he 'd gone, I began to catch stray beams of light on the situation, in which our countryman's part shone bright at least by contrast. ' One sees that the lady is in love with him,' I put in; whereupon a man with a whole bush of beard informed me ruefully that it was too late for me to be up. But I noticed my remark became a bone of frantic contention."

Well, the main interest of the incident is in its

after effect on the Furness Boy, who for the next two days spoke little and made no music whatever, and for a whole week walked the straightest and narrowest of paths to be found in that merry *Quartier*. Perhaps it was only that his æsthetic sense had been shocked to revolt. So George Deming thought. Or perhaps whatever of his father lurked in the son's queerly compounded nature, had come into temporary control. The two days' silence suggests Mr. Wilton Furness.

And now without warning, Toper's hoofs were beating their Devil's tattoo on the frozen ground, and the Furness Boy was back. Mrs. Fish said later that it was merely to attend to business relating to his coming of age; but the Ladies' Aid had its doubts about that.

Few saw him on that day of his reappearance, perhaps because he rode so fast that one had no time. Gray Summers said that he was singing. Some one else caught the sound of a reckless laugh. And when Mrs. Deming learned why no one saw him come back from that ride, she shut herself in her kitchen, where she produced, besides a batch of pickled apples storiette for the Sabbath School Bugle, ending with the words, "For the ways of the Lord are just righteous altogether."



CHAPTER II

ZANDRIE OF THE CONVENT

As for Zandrie, if it seems a pity to introduce her clenching her fists and stamping with rage, please consider that but for this tantrum she would not have been ordered to spend the night in the retreat-house, and that her whole life might have been another matter. For, though she was outrageously naughty much of the time, especially since coming to the convent, this was an epoch-marking tantrum both by virtue of its fury and because of the curious part it played as link in the chain of cause and effect between her first two glimpses of the Knight, as it pleased her to call him. The first had lured her into disobedience of that strictest of orders never to leave the grounds; thence to a battle with the Sub-Prioress, her sister. And now, as usual, she was denying that she was at all sorry. "You can make me go without my supper," she added, "only you won't 'cause you 're afraid of committing murder. I wish you would; I 'd like to die."

"That is wicked," said Sister Angela.

"That 's why I said it."

The nun shut her lips tight before pronouncing her sentence; "You shall go back to the retreat-house again to-night. Meanwhile you shall stay in this cell till bed-time — on your honor not to leave it — and have bread and water for supper." She said it in a voice controlled almost to suffocation. Then she swept from the room.

"I — don't — care — and — I 'm — not — sorry!" Zandrie screamed, stamping on each word.

But when the sound of Sister Angela's footsteps had died away, she collapsed on the floor and wailed. For it was no light punishment, this, of a night in the retreat-house, all alone but for that uncanny couple, the deaf and dumb janitor and his wife; and she knew that she must be alone, as it was not the night for Father Haggarty's coming, and no other guest had arrived in several weeks. No light punishment, as she knew too well, having cried herself sick in that retreat-house room on the third night after her coming. And to think it had once been intended that she should sleep there forever! But after that third night of panic, from which she had emerged so pitiful an object that Sister Loyola put her to bed in the infirmary,— after that, merciful Reverend Mother had given her a cell in the lay sisters' quarters within the convent itself, and allowed her to eat with the Sister Refectorian and the weekly servers. Even these meals were not hilarious, to be sure, being eaten in profound silence; but one had the comfort of knowing

at least that if a body did speak, her voice would be heard. No one in the refectory was deaf or really dumb; whereas the terror of the retreat-house was, that unless a guest were at hand, one might scream and scream and never be heard. And so, "I do care!" she was sobbing now, "And I wish he had n't passed." But she buried her face in her little black skirt, of course, lest some one should hear and perchance think she was sorry after all.

Her rage tried to turn against the Knight, for though he would doubtless rescue her some day, this was meanwhile very much his fault. But for him, she would have sat quiet on the wall, content to taste the ecstasies of flight in anticipation. But the wild rhythm of hoofs on the frozen ground had stirred her blood; and then came the Knight himself.

For he was really the Knight — that was the wonder — who had been for so long the star of that playhouse where she herself was audience, stage-manager, and leading lady. The dramas of the Knight, and they were many, had started from a dream in which a person of mediæval aspect offered to carry her on his horse to a place called Dedham, which she knew to be a stronghold rival to Camelot. But in the dream, he had looked rather like the taller of those two poor Princes in the Tower, in a picture that used to hang over her bed, and she had changed him a little after she woke, inasmuch as a knight who should rescue one from walls guarded by Sister Angelas, must be more

commanding of eye and bulk. And lo! as she s
the wall, he was there, riding before her in garisl
light. Whose heart would not have leapt at
of his hair, crisp and gleaming in the sun tha
come out just the very minute before he passed?
though his passing was as the passing of a drea
he was real from the soles of his boots, all th
up his magnificent, supple back to the laugh and
ing "Hello!" flung to her over his shoulder
wonder that he laughed at sight of her perched
blackbird there on the wall! And who would
stayed from following? Whose heart would n
high at a dream come true?

But by the time that she had dropped t
ground, he had turned down a road that cut dee
the woods; and then the road itself twisted s
when she came all out of breath to its entrance,
was nothing to tell of him but a far-away b
hoofs on frozen ground. But that he would
back, she never doubted. So she scampered f
pure joy of it through the good, gray woods, a
but for the crunch of her feet on fallen twigs.
jumped over hummocks and logs till breath
then she walked till hunger sharply advised her t
about.

Of course it was long past the hour for the
meal when she reached the convent, and althou
tried hard to be glad, an ignominious wearine
cold hands on her glee. In fact, when she four



there was no friendly peach tree by which one might scale the wall from the outside and that she must ring at the gate, she was only shivering and cross and defiant.

As the chapel clock was striking four, a nun opened Zandrie's door very softly and peeped around its edge. "Sister Isidore!" Zandrie whispered, smiling. Five minutes later she was laughing immoderately, and at last, "I do love you," she protested, "even if you are a nun, and even if you do like Sister Angela, and —" But she left off so suddenly that Sister Isidore made a guilty start towards the door. Zandrie was at the window. "Look! Quick! It 's one of the novices running right across the flower-beds as though the Devil were after her! Her veil 's askew! Let 's go and — Oh-h! I forgot. O, I hate honor!"

"But it 's me that must go," said the Sister, "or the dear Mother will be locking me up too."

Zandrie of course clung to her skirt. "If the Mother comes, you can pop under the bed!"

But the nun jerked away, for a voice in the corridor was calling. And voices seldom called in the convent. Sister Isidore sped down the hall, running almost as fast as the novice.

Long after her skirt had whisked out of sight, Zandrie stood on the threshold listening to sounds that were strange enough in a place where people stepped and spoke as though some one perpetually ill were within ear-shot. Now a door actually slammed, and

another nun scurried along, and after her, the plump Prioress herself. One of Zandrie's feet crossed the sill. For a full minute the battle raged. It ended in her wheeling about, an honorable but very sullen prisoner.

The view from the window gave no clue to the commotion. Nothing to be seen but the cloister garden, which was now just a dingy carpet of triangles and squares outlined in frozen green; the arcade of the cloister itself, eclipsed below the window by its own narrow, green-tiled roof; above the arcade opposite, the red brick side of the church adjoining the convent walls at right angles on either hand,— over all, a January sky that promised to snow without keeping its word. No flying snow-flakes; no more flying white veils askew,— nor even a decorously draped black one. But how the novice had run, as though from the memory of some evil sight! The very line of her footsteps looked ill-drawn as by a hand nervous with hurry.

Presently, all interest in the subject sank under the heavy thought that supper — such as it was — would not come for a whole hour. The memory of the Knight no longer heartened her; and so, too tired to concoct a recipe of new naughtiness, she turned to the box of treasures. But the collar of the late Laura, her cat, filled her with anguish only. So, to the crisp Bible substituted by Sister Angela for the

volume that had been Mam'selle's parting gift. Sister Angela's had more books, to be sure, with most curious names, and smelt pleasantly of new leather; but it was not Mam'selle's keepsake. As for the gold eagle that her father had given her on her tenth birthday four months before, it was the same gold-piece that Mam'selle said would buy her heart's desire, which Zandrie had at once defined as "une petite villa de rideaux rouges," to which Mam'selle and Mickie the stable boy were to be invited for long visits. Yet to-day she could not even see the villa. And when the gift of seeing failed, Zandrie was in a bad way indeed.

The long hour dragged itself out. The bell tolled for Vespers; the nuns sang their office. Then the clink of dishes below, and the server's chant, and the drone of the reader's voice told of the convent supper; but no one came, even with bread and water, to where she sat in the dark. And another hour crept by, and yet another, till the Compline bell rang and she knew that she was forgotten.

Next, behold her with her nightgown under her arm, marching to the room in the retreat-house where Sister Angela had decreed that she should sleep. Yes, she would go to bed there and die of starvation and honor — gladly die! And Sister Angela would lose at one swoop all the years wrested at such pains from Purgatory. Sister Angela would be sorry.

She undressed and curled up in the big, cold bed,

and so, for full fifteen minutes, lay waiting for death. Then with a little, angry scream she bounced up, and strode down the hall in her nightgown.

She had met no one on her way through the convent, both nuns and lay sisters being still in church. In the retreat-house, a light had shone through the half-open door of the janitor's room on the ground floor, but the halls had been quite dark except for the moon that laid a ghostly patch of light on the stair landing. Yet now a yellow glimmer filtered through the crack of a door on the second floor. It was the door of Father Haggarty's room. And this was not the night of his weekly visit.

Yet, if it might be he, a good friend was at hand. "Father!" she whispered at the crack. No answer. So she pushed the door far enough to peer around it. There was no one to be seen; yet a candle burned on the mantle-shelf, and the air was heavy with a subtly disagreeable, medicinal odor. As she was turning away bewildered, her glance fell on the bed in the corner, and then a little "Oh!" broke from her, for somebody lay in the bed, peacefully sleeping.

Who could it be? Father Haggarty would have made a very great mountain of the bed-clothes. Had a guest come, then, without her knowledge, and one entitled to the honor of Father Haggarty's quarters? It must be a very pious lady indeed! And why had she gone to bed so early, with her candle burning? Curiosity sent her tiptoeing in. But when

she reached the bed-side, amazement smote her so that she almost toppled forward on to the sleeper; for it was neither a pious lady, nor a nun, nor even a priest, but an ordinary man. And men are never, never allowed inside even the retreat-house of St. Scholastica's, unless they are priests or old, deaf janitors, or carry charcoal stoves to mend the roof. She had met one such creature skulking very guiltily through Seven Holy Founders' Corridor itself. And as this man in the bed was obviously neither roof-mender nor priest, and was, moreover, pale and dreadfully still, with scratches across his left cheek, it seemed certain that something interesting had happened.

She stood staring at the fair hair and closed eyelids and lips, and again at the hair, which was almost as charming as the Knight's. Her Knight! Remembrance of him brought a shock. It could n't possibly be that this — O sakes alive no! For the Knight was a radiant creature, all vigor and life; and this poor thing was pale and limp. And yet the face was comely, and the hair — Yes and No fought in her brain till she gasped. It could n't be — it must be — the Knight!

There is no telling how long she might have stood before this mystery, had not an arm been slipped about her, drawing her back. It was Sister Isidore's.

"Is he alive?" Zandrie asked. She had not told even Sister Isidore about any Knight.

"Come away, dear heart," was all her answer, "or it 's not long ye 'll be living yourself, shivering about in your nightie and bare toes."

Whereupon, the nun bore her ruthlessly out of the room and back to her convent cell,— just when the retreat-house had begun to seem not such an evil place after all! But the bread and butter that awaited her in the cell were a change for the better. Sister Angela had remembered at last, and detailed Sister Isidore to see to the prisoner.

"I was to have only bread and water," Zandrie confessed.

"Aha! But Sister Angela 'll never know — though Father Thomas shall, to be sure. Ye 're to eat every morsel, now, because I tell ye."

Zandrie chuckled. "But I don't want him to die!" she broke off in the midst of a bite to exclaim.

"And perhaps he 'll oblige ye."

"Will he stay if he does n't die?"

"Not long, I 'm thinking. There was enough to-do about his coming in at all. Sister Angela was for turning him off entirely."

"Gracious me! How did he get past her?" The feat appeared both phenomenal and heroic. But then, remembering the commotion, she understood in a flash. It *was* the Knight. And he was even such a knight as he looked, who, having seen her dismal estate on the wall, had ridden back to the rescue and no sooner hewn a hole big enough to squeeze through, than the

novice had given the alarm and the whole sisterhood set upon him, thirty to one. Yet even this hardly explained his being in Father Haggarty's bed. How did he get in then? she had to ask.

"For one thing, he would keep saying this was his home; and there 'll be no one to tell what he meant, either, for it was the last thing he —"

"No, no! Begin at the beginning — with the novice."

"Eh, but it never began with her! Saints forbid! It all came of his horse that Sister Euphrasie hears galloping in the lane; for Sister Xavier gave her a little dispense from Instruction, ye know, to go walk once about the grounds, she 's so pale to-day. And then she hears a queer, dreadful sound and peeps through the keyhole of the big gate — which she never ought, but custody of the eyes is easy to forget even when a body 's professed; that 's sure! And the keyhole 's that big that she sees the horse toppled over in the ditch, and the poor lad — I say ye 're to drink your milk right down!"

"O quick! — go on!"

"What! and me running on like this in the Great Silence time itself!" Sister Isidore tucked her hands in her sleeves and started for the door.

"But you have n't told!" cried Zandrie.

"Well then! but ye 're not to make free with my veil, or — Ye 'll be the ruin of a poor nun! Come, then — and where were we at? Sure, at the keyhole!



And then comes Sister Euphrasie running from the gate up to the work-room where we 're sitting sewing as quiet as birds in the night — only myself was n't there, come to think — and she calls Mother, and Mother sends Sister Loyola calling Sister Rose from the linen closet — she 's so tall and strong — and then she meets myself in Seven Holy Founders', and that makes four, ye see. 'One for each paw!' says Mother,— for we 've opened the gate now and laid hold of the horse that 's flat on his side. 'Now,' says Mother, 'pull hard! One, two, three!' But the creature never stirs, it 's so heavy and great, and the dear Mother slips on the ice. So then we go fetch Sister Gertrude for his head and Sister Angela for his tail."

"O poor beastie!"

"Eh, but it 's dead, ye see, and done with trouble. It 's 'poor rider,' though; for it was himself we were trying to dislodge from under, and he never lost himself till we took him up, and it 's a mercy he 's no in his senses yet. But sure, we had to take him u for, don't ye see, the telephone 's stopped working e tirely to-day, and Father Thomas, he was off with t horse to fetch home the grand new monstrance, a the lad could never be lying in the ditch till old I Clung footed it to town for a doctor and wa And then, his falling right at our gate — that 's t thought of, as Sister Rose said herself. Come but it 's no such matter: there 's thousands of

souls — But ye can pray for him to the dear Virgin, and no harm done by that. And I 'd put up a prayer to good Saint Polycarp too, that would n't revile Our Lord to save himself; for it 's his day I 'm sinning against like this,— forgive us all!"

On the whole, Sister Isidore's account satisfied Zandrie almost as well as her own, and, after praying to that new but delightfully approachable deity, Holy Virgin, she fell asleep on the resolve to live long enough at least to nurse her fallen Knight back to life.



CHAPTER III

ZANDRIE LEARNS HER PATER NOSTER

But he was out of his head and would frighten her, said the silly nuns, and no other reason would they give for forbidding her even to look on him. Her announcement that she would take full charge, was met with laughter. She was forbidden to go into the retreat-house. Yet she had nothing to do, and Sister Loyola, too much. But of such is the mad world of grown-ups. So it was not until the third day from his coming that Sister Angela yielded even so far as to allow one personally conducted peep.

At sight of him, the little girl looked up into her sister's face for sympathy, forgetting that she had never yet found it there. Then the face on the pillow took up her thought so that she forgot again and asked "what color, sister dear supposed, were his eyes?" He had sped by on his horse too fast for her to see; but they must be blue. They were! As though in answer, they opened to let her see, and he began to talk to her, too. "Where's the diapason gone?" But without waiting for answer, "The toc cata's absurd without the open diapason — of stops, confound it! But I tell you it's gone. Ke



doing that way lately, and no telling when it will come back either." The bright, uncanny eyes were looking at some one behind her now, so that she turned, and, seeing no one, gripped her sister's sleeve. Meanwhile he had begun to speak his mind to the invisible presence in French so fluent yet odd, that Zandrie, though she had had French governesses since she could talk, found it hard to understand. The nun started to pull her toward the door. "Stop!" he commanded, holding out his hand so peremptorily that Sister Angela hesitated — and was lost. For he caught her veil in an excellent grip, and then — oh, then the intentness with which he was searching her face melted into a heart-winning smile, and "You bewitching little piece!" he whispered, "kiss me and I 'll tell you something!" But before the Sub-Prioress of St. Scholastica's could rally, "O hell!" he burst out, "is there no one to help but a pack of women with cuffs across their foreheads? . . . The Ladies's Aid! Ha ha!" The wild laugh barely reached Zandrie's ears as the fleeing nun dragged her down the hall.

But, two days later, he had come back from the land of dreams, to stay and to ask questions; and it was a proud day for Zandrie, because at Vesper time she was allowed to watch at his side. If he needed attention, she was to run to the chapel and very quietly beckon Sister Loyola from choir. For as it happened, every hospital nurse of the town was in

demand, and till one could be gotten, Sister Loyola, with old Sister Dositheus for companion, had been appointed by Reverend Mother to care for the guest.

Daylight was melting into the glow of sunset, and the bell was tolling, when Zandrie stole to her post. Her charge lay asleep, his left arm bandaged from elbow to wrist, straight at his side; the other, stretched towards her so that the hand hung over the bed-side. It was a hand that looked as though it could do very deftly its owner's will, yet as though it could grip hard too. As for the face, the longer she studied it, the more disquieting grew a doubt whether it did really fulfill her ideal. For the eyebrows, darker than his hair and drawn down towards the bridge of his nose as though frowning a little, by no means pleased her. She would have had them nicely arched. And then, his mouth — oh, it would be sure to give orders, and the chin would see to it that they were carried out! Even his hair was not quite what it might be; it hardly curled at all,— and yet the color . . . In the fulness of her satisfaction with that, she hove a sigh that woke him up.

At first his eyes seemed to question the bars of deep red-gold drawn by the sun across the wall, but soon they traveled around to Zandrie's face, and the frown of bewilderment relaxed. "I thought —" he began, but his voice dropped as though very tired. Then "I took you — for a portrait — of a bobolink. A black — and white."

"They said I must n't talk," the little girl said shyly, for, for some reason he was one of the few people of whom she felt in awe.

"But you must," he answered with such authority that "I told you so!" she thought. "What 's your name?" he demanded.

"It 's very queer, I 'm afraid. It 's — Alexandra Owen Donallon — after my father Alexander."

But he did not, like some obnoxious persons, ask if she bought it by the yard, nor tell her that she might grow up to it. He was perfectly decorous. "Mine 's Julian — after my grandfather," he said. "I 've forgotten the rest." And then in spite of her he asked three questions in a row, and when she threatened to go for Sister Loyola, he tried to reach out for her skirt; but the movement of his arm, though slight, made him catch his breath.

"I 'm sorry," she whispered, leaning towards him.

"Thanks. *I 'm mad!*" And he shut his eyes and asked no more questions.

In fact, as she sat firmly resisting the temptation to swing her feet; while the nuns sang in the chapel and the bars of gold on the wall turned gray, he lay so still that she thought he slept. And then the dusk deepened so that she could hardly see him, and the room got so dreadfully still that she began to wriggle.

"Alexandra — Owen — Donallon —" It was the voice of her charge, and profoundly meditative; "Just

let me get hold of you — just to make sure you 're not one of the dreams."

She took his hand. It felt rather limp. A picture of the Knight on horseback flashed into her memory — a dazzling picture so that something seemed to catch her by the throat. Suddenly but very gently she laid her cheek against his forehead.

It was not till after a discussion between Sister Angela, Sister Loyola, and the Prioress, that she was allowed to go back to him next afternoon — after Sister Loyola had plead in his behalf and prevailed. The part of the talk that Zandrie heard amused her so that she told Julian. "What do you s'pose!" she giggled, "They said they didn 't know you!"

"They 're uncommonly right."

"Well, I told them *I did,* and Sister Isidore interrupted Reverend Mother and said you looked like a blessed angel, so she 's doing penance now. But you see," she added, "I 'd seen you before — on the wall. And — and you were coming back for me, were n't you?"

"Back for you?"

She caught a little sigh, for his expression was not even intelligent. But already that arch-destroyer of fun, common sense, had begun to build a wall between the World of Things Only Oneself Sees, and the World of Everybody Else, so that she was coming to know them for two worlds; and in her heart of hearts she feared that Julian had never heard o

her Knight or herself. Yet before abandoning hope, "Perhaps you 've forgotten," she suggested.

"I reckon I have."

"Zandrie of the Convent?" she hinted, desperately.

"Don't know what you 're talking about," he said rather testily.

Well, it was the sort of thing one could not explain. Perhaps it was more than the World of Everybody Else often granted, that a being so like one's Knight in color and shape should be there before one's eyes.

"You 're not on the road to being a nun, are you?" he asked later.

"Never!" she answered with sudden ferocity. "And listen!" she whispered, "I hate it here! O, I hate it! I hate them all, *all!* — but Sister Isidore — well, and Sister Loyola. Sister Angela says I 'll want to be a nun some day,— but I shan't ever! *Imagine me* saying my prayers all day and sewing the rest of it! And besides, I most solemnly promised my father. That night he was so sick and died next day, he talked about nuns a good deal and made me promise not to be one. He always used to make me promise never to be Catholic either. He and Mamma were always talking about Catholics; they must all be pretty bad, I reckon, though Sister Isidore 's *very* Catholic, she says. But after Papa died, Uncle Jason came and got me and brought me straight here, though Mam'selle and I made an awful scene." She sighed with

pleasure, but added ruefully, "People's *whole* sisters are usually little girls like themselves, are n't they?"

Julian being unable to answer this question, she explained that Sister Angela was "only half, and horribly old."

"How long have you been here?" he asked gravely.

"Oh, ages and ages. Months, I guess."

"What do you do?"

This sympathetic interest was delightful! "Nothing," she said. "Nothing but learn arithmetic and things with Sister Angela and Sister Petronilla — worse 'n my name, is n't that? — and go to Mass and Holy Office — that 's church, you know — because I 'm made to; and I have to learn religious things in Latin, and sew. There 's no one to play with anyway, you see, but of course I can pretend by myself. And there 's Sister Isidore — she is n't as old as the rest, but O dear! she is n't as young as me." She hesitated, and then, "I may as well tell you every bit. The rest of the time I 'm — wicked. And the more they punish me, the wickeder I am — on purpose. There!"

But he smiled, and not as the superintendent of a Sunday school to which she went just one Sunday, had smiled. "I reckon," he said at last, "I 've met my match." And then she laughed herself, in delight at the discovery that reality can be better than drear

"Are your father and mother both dead too?" asked, and then caught her breath at sight of

lines that a twinge as of bodily pain cut in his forehead.

"Yes," he answered, almost sullenly. "Both."

"And — and no brothers or sisters?"

"None that I know of. So we must be good friends," he added, opening his hand; and she laid hers in it and raised it to her lips. She loved him already, she frankly owned, even better than Sister Isidore.

"O goody!" she exclaimed a moment later, "I've the splendidest idea! Do you s'pose they'd let me come oftener if I were good?"

"If *I* were, you mean?"

"Don't tease! I'm dreadfully in earnest. I believe I won't ever cross myself wrong again, or say 'eeny meeny miny mo' for 'Pater noster.' Do you s'pose if I learned it right — I can any minute, you know; I really know it already and my Invocation too! — they'd let me come as often as I like?"

"You might risk it."

"O me! O my!" she chuckled.

And whether as a result of her reform or not, she was hereafter allowed to see him whenever he asked for her. "It's hard being good, though," she said, "I'd gotten so into the habit of being bad!"

"He has a strange influence over the child," said Sister Angela.

"The power to cast out divils," Sister Isidore suggested,— and did penance later.

"There's a certain spirit of grace within him," said the grave Sister Loyola, "but it's not all victorious yet; he will suffer much in soul as well as body."

For many a day the spirit of grace was all that Zandrie saw, even when he lay glaring at the foot of the bed as though he would like to chop it into bits, and shut his mouth tight instead of answering a question. Even at the moments when his forehead grew moist and his eyes closed as though afraid of the tale of pain they might tell, she heard no evil word escape him. For some reason he seemed ashamed of pain, so that, sitting on her hands to hold them from caresses, she gallantly pretended not to notice.

The first lapse from grace that she really had to acknowledge, came when she forgot and plumped down beside him on the bed. He had been flat on his back for so long now that no wonder she sometimes forgot why! But she had cause to remember in future, for he rapped out "Be careful!" so fiercely that she could scarcely believe her ears. Of course she flung herself on the floor and howled in remorse. "Oh! I could die of sorriness! Your pr-*precious* back!" Had it been within reach, she would have done what she might to mend it with kisses, so she kissed his hand instead. But it gripped her shoulder savagely, and "Get out of the room if you're going to cry," he commanded, so that she stopped in sheer amazement. He apologized, and admitted that

he had a "beastly temper"— an admission which, as it was evidently true, seemed a handsome apology in itself. The second lapse from grace came two days later, but it required no apology.

Early in their friendship she began to tutor him in the great art of pretending. The first lesson came on the day after Dr. Summers and a surgeon from Washington had put him into a plaster jacket, and a hospital nurse had taken Sister Loyola's place. "As soon as you know how to pretend," said Zandrie. "you won't mind being alone so very much; perhaps you won't even mind your new turtle-shell. Why Julian dearie, sometimes when I 'm pretending, I 'd almost rather nobody 'd speak to me, I 'm having so much better time where I am. Want to come too? Then listen!" She lowered her voice. "I have three black beans."

"Where?"

"O but you must 'nt ask such things! I keep them in a little box of ebony and mother-of-pearl, and it opens queerly, up-side-down. It came from Popocatapetl. Well, I carry it in my petticoat pocket — a pocket nobody knows of. Interested? My, how I love you! They 'll do anything for you — my beans, I mean — that they do for me. There 's the biggest — you could n't guess what that does when I squeeze it." She beamed at him, her hands clasped. "It makes me fly! Think of it! You 've dreamed it, you know. I never go up very high — sometimes only

just out of Sister Angela's reach, poor soul. Sometimes when I 'm running like lightning and people after me — just as they 've almost caught up, I squeeze my bean, and then — think what fun! And sometimes 'stead of walking up-stairs, I go by the sunbeam that leads to the first landing; only the funny thing is that generally when I go up that way, I send my real self up by the stairs, and the two of us meet at the top."

"That 's curious."

"Is n't it! But the second bean — just let me tell about that. It 's smaller, and it — O guess! It makes me invisible! I use it especially at Mass, when I 'm kneeling by Mother McClung. She 's deaf and dumb, you know, and cooks your dinner. Well, and suddenly she does n't see me. Nobody does. And I stalk up and down the aisle in my squeaky shoes, and all around the choir till the Sisters get perfectly wild. Sometimes I twitch their veils or whisper awful things in their ears. Once I whispered 'ten devils!' O my goodness! And I scuff behind people on the street — used to, I mean — and they think it 's a ghost. Oh, what don't I do!" and she hugged herself in ecstasy. After a few seconds, however, she left off laughing and leaned forward. "I 'll tell you about my third bean, too. You could n't laugh? O no! for you 're Julian and you 'll come with me." She looked out of the window across the room. "When I 'm so unhappy I want to cry myself to pieces, then — then I

stand at the window and squeeze my littlest bean. I like to watch it come — my cloud chariot, you know. First it 's way up, only a speck of cloud. But it comes fast, bigger and bigger. And I get into it. And then — O Julian!" and she seized his hand, "would n't you like to come too? There 's room. And we 'll go straight up into the blue, till it 's all we see. But pretty soon you see something bright. It 's my cloud palace — built of sunsets, and the floors are white and gray; but the pillars and walls — Oh! And the doors are rainbows. You can go under them, through hall after hall; you hardly ever get to the end. And it 's all light — all but the night corner. Listen! It 's made of the blackest clouds you ever saw. It scares you, sometimes! And at one end there 's a tower, and you look up into it, up and up, for it 's higher than you can imagine, and at the top is a little moon rainbow with the moon in the middle. Julian! I think the chariot 's on its way!" She sprang up; but the afternoon sun shone into her eyes, blinding, so that she groped for his hand. "Come!"

"Some other day," he said.

"Why? Why?"

"Another day — when I 'm out of my shell."

She looked at him, confused by this recall to the World of Everybody Else, to which, after all, Julian belonged, poor dear. But perhaps she could yet show him the way out. She forgot to try to any more that

afternoon, however, for the simple reason that the bar of sunlight had reached his hair. "Oh! Oh!" she whispered.

Half an hour later, in the midst of the veracious history of Launcelot her cat, Sister Angela summoned her to Vespers.

"I won't go!" she said under her breath, to Julian.

"Yes, you will," he answered.

She looked into his eyes; then rose and walked slowly to the door. But when Sister Angela held out her hand, "I go," she announced, "because *he* tells me to."

No wonder that the nuns shook their heads in bewilderment, or that Sister Isidore did penance for further remarks on Julian's ability to rouse as well as to cast out devils.



CHAPTER IV

JULIAN LEARNS SOMETHING TOO

These were good days for Zandrie; in spite of sorrow for her comrade's pain, they were the best since her coming to the convent; and the idea that they must end, never dawned till a morning three weeks from their beginning. Sister Petronilla, having little to do as guest-mistress just now, was helping her cope with fractions in a corner of the work-room, where Reverend Mother herself came to whisper that two ladies who wanted to make their retreat, might be notified that they could come any time after to-morrow. Dr. Summers had consented to his patient's being moved —" as well now as later " she added with a shake of the head.

Fractions fared ill after this.

When she could slip away to Julian, " What 's up, Sister Bobolink? " he asked. " More trouble with the crows? "— so he indecorously indicated the nuns.

But the title of " Sister," which usually set her dancing with rage, passed unchallenged. Clasping her hands under her chin to hold back the sobs, she said " They 're going to send you away."

"That all! I thought your chariot must have punctured a tire on the tip of a steeple."

But Sister Bobolink's tears spilled over.

"Stop that!" he commanded. "Come talk it over. Are they going to cart me away in the gray of the dawn, as they did Toper?"

"It 's no l—laughing matter," and she screwed the tears back with her fists.

"About Toper,— no." He took one of the fortifying fists. "You ought to be ashamed — a big thing ten years old! If I had n't forgotten how, I 'd cry too, just to show how silly — There, little sister — look! you can get up on the bed here. You 're right narrow!"— he pronounced it "narrer"—"Only don't make an earthquake of it, sobbing."

Having never been invited to this honorable post before, she forgot her woe in its novelty. He was actually letting her curl up beside him, her cheek against his neck and right ear, while with the hand of the arm she was lying on, he stroked back her hair. But the tears soon came again so that she had to clench her teeth for fear of the earthquake.

"There are some people the other side of the water," he said irrelevently, "who 'd laugh if they saw — this."

"Wh—why?"

"O well, maybe because they are n't little girls — real *little* girls — themselves. I never had much to do

with one before. Would n't have thought I 'd enjoy it."

"Oh!" Zandrie wailed, "I 've got to get off the bed!"

But he held her fast. He was all boxed up so a little earthquake could n't hurt. "Now let 's be reasonable. I 'm only going to the hospital."

"Mi-i-iles away!"

"Three," he corrected, "and you can come to see me, and run away to do it, which 'll suit you to a T. And presently when my legs do what I tell 'em — queer they 're so weak still! — then I 'll get a new horse and put you on in front, and off we 'll gallop, no matter what the crows say. And when I get back to Paris, I 'll — oh, I reckon I 'll write to you, which is a sight more than I 'd do for any one else."

But she was not to be cajoled so, nor even by the caressing hand against her cheek, whose touch perhaps made the coming loss look the more terrific. "Oh!" she sobbed, "I can't be a nun here without you! I can see it here without you!"

Yes, and the vision filled her with a terror of the loneliness that she had already come to know; so that the power of seeing, so often her best friend, proved traitor now, turning the wine of Julian's cheer to water. She managed to hear him through in silence while he explained the certainty of her coming often to the hospital; but then she drew closer and clung to

him in a passion of entreaty. "Take me with you! Julian *dearie!* — take me with you to Paris!"

"Mon Dieu!"

"You could if you wanted. You can do anything you try. You can make me good! — the nuns say so. O take me and see! I was wicked before you came and I 'll be wicked when you 're gone. I 'll grow up wicked. They 'll try to make me Catholic and break my promise. But with you I 'll be good forever. I 'll mind you better than Sister Isidore, even! I 'll be your real, true sister and take care of you when you 're hurt, and we 'll pretend together. I 'll make new things for us to pretend. O think!"

He seemed to be thinking hard, for he lay still, his hand forgetting to stroke her hair.

"Remember," she whispered, "I 'll be good forever."

"By heaven!" he said at last, "I don't see why not."

"You mean you 'll —"

"I 've got an idea."

"You 'll take me with you? Julian!" She bounded off the bed to give play to the joy that threatened to throttle her.

"I 'll do my best."

"Your best! Oh, then — why, *then* —" Where she gave her confidence, she gave it entire; and at first sight of her Knight's hair, she had dumped the whole of her trust at his feet. And so, though he told her

nothing of his idea — only that he must have time to plan a campaign against Sister Angela — she needed no more assurance. He said he would do his best; and where others' best left off, his began; so her freedom was as good as won already — freedom plus Julian! And her life was going to be happy after all!

It was snowing splendidly fast, as though to help hurry the minutes till he should summon her, which he might do, she thought, very soon now. The noon office had been sung and the midday siesta was over, and Sister Angela had actually gone into the retreat-house. So Zandrie pranced and tumbled in the drifts, and when she found poor, deaf McClung shoveling a path, she snatched the spade and worked gallantly for full three minutes, while he grinned, stamped, and beat his hands. Then Sister Petronilla came through the path and Zandrie threw snow over her veil. "You 're a novice again!" she shouted.

Ten minutes later, impatient of waiting, she ran into the retreat-house, and was about to demand admittance to Julian's room, when the sound of Sister Angela's voice arrested her. The door stood ajar. Eavesdropping was an evil practice of course, but Julian was now answering the nun, and the words and tone snared her into temptation. "You mean," he was saying, "you think any soul can be fitted to a convent life?"

"I believe," the Sub-Prioress said — and her voice was not warming to hear — "that my sister's will

find its true home here, in time. What I believe is usually well founded."

"Good God! Zandrie a nun! I beg your pardon. But — why, she 'd wear herself out just struggling. Besides, she was cut out for a right big work in the world. She ought to be let loose to do it. I 've seen a deal of men and women, and I tell you she 's unusual. There 's something in her that was n't made to be wasted, I 'll wager. For Heaven's sake, my dear lady, don't imprison her here! It 'll be a crime against her and her Maker. Give her to me, and as I said, I 'll make it my first duty to bring her up well to do the work in the world that she was meant for. Give her to me!"

When the nun's voice broke the long pause, it was low and vibrant and slightly hoarse. "*You* asking for charge of a young soul! *You* daring to judge between its Maker and me! You! — Oh, we received you — kept you, at least, in mercy, knowing about your life, — trusting to the Blessed Virgin and your own honor, to work no harm. *You!* who do not even profess the faith!" The tense, accusing voice kept on, but the listener heard no more because of a step on the stairs.

It was Dr. Summers, at sight of whom Zandrie was more dismayed than by Sister Angela's unjust denunciation; for where he entered, his sway was absolute. Twice he had dismissed her by a mere jerk of the thumb. And now she knew that she might not

see Julian for a whole half-hour. But after stepping into a vacant guest-room to let her sister pass without seeing her — for the Sub-Prioress too was dismissed, by a jerk of the thumb? — after that the time passed quickly. For in spite of Sister Angela's resistance, Julian would have his way; his "best" meant certain success. Imagination wrought busily, while she floated on unsounded depths of trust.

So soon! The doctor was striding down the hall, furiously — at a tempo in fact suggesting flight. And then — well, then came Julian's second breach of courtesy, through which she caught a glimpse, more startling than the first, of a certain untamed creature shaking its chains behind the bars of his gentler self; yet a breach through which her heart tried to reach in a very agony of unasked forgiveness.

It began with his command to call back Dr. Summers; and she raced at his bidding. The nurse had gone down stairs for something. It required three breathless appeals flung over the bannisters, to arrest the doctor, who faced about with the growl of a captured bear.

"Come here to the right," Julian said harshly, grappling his captive to the bedside by one of the doctor's buttons. "Now tell me what that meant — those last words — exactly."

Though the Doctor's eyebrows were almost eclipsing his eyes, he shifted his feet as one discomfited, crushing his felt hat under one arm and his surgeon's

case under the other, and staring down at the muscular hand on his coat as though quite unable to release himself. Then he turned and glowered at Zandrie. "What words?" he rumbled, eyeing her still.

Julian's voice was low but very clear. "That it depended on — what? I want the answer without any nonsense."

Would the stupid man never give it? Zandrie could have told him that when his patient asked a question in those level tones, one had better answer at once and to the point. This was evidently a person who did not observe; and as he seemed to be looking to her for advice, she gave it: "Go on."

And at last he did go on, pulling his voice up as through a hole in his throat, by jerks; "Yes — I suppose you may as well know it now as later. You 're probably as well fitted — as able to bear it now — as you 'll ever be. That is — of course the minor injuries — the fracture of the wrist — It 's a complicated fracture, as they say — You managed to do it quite thoroughly — but you 'll have the use of your arm again, of course. But the spine — In a case of injury to vertebræ and cord, producing paralysis like yours — Improvement possible, but no case of perfect recovery on record." A tremendous tug had succeeded in pulling this last up through the hole in a mass, so that the words came too fast to be understood at once.

Julian's eyes, staring up at the doctor's flushed face,

showed him groping wildly at first; then in growing comprehension of some atrocity the sight of which shakes a man with indignation, loathing, defiance, rage. "Like this for life? For life? A damned cripple — for life?" Suddenly anger snatched the blood from his lips to kindle a flame in his eyes. His hand let go the doctor's coat, to clutch a watch that lay on a chair at his side.

The Doctor meanwhile was moving slowly, clumsily, fumbling for his hat; yet he told his wife later that he had no recollection of what Julian was saying. Zandrie heard, however, and the fierce words rang in her ears for hours after. "It's absurd! It's a lie! I've ridden dozens of steeplechases; I'm the best rider in Maryland. If I were n't in the hell of a cast you put me into, I'd make you swallow your lie. You're a damned, lying fool, I say! Get out of this room! . . . O my God!"

The doctor, who was already on the threshold, beckoned to Zandrie; but frightened though she was, she had other ideas of friendship than to leave Julian now; for his burst of fury had whirled her into a fragmentary comprehension of tragedy. However dimly and inexpressibly, she yet realized that his spirit and one of its crises were met together for a mortal joust. An earthquake shock had let loose that creature shaking its chains, to fight for life with all that she had hitherto known as Julian, and victory for that Julian must take a long draught of his heart's blood;

and victory might not choose his side after all. But either way, the struggle would be bitter, wearying body and soul together.

For what seemed quite an hour, he lay without sign of struggle or grief except for the arm crooked over his eyes, rigid as a bolt. It was so tensely rigid that after a while it began to tremble. His hand still clenched the watch that he had caught up as though to hurl at the man whom he charged with lying. Yet if he really believed the dreadful words to be lies, he would surely have said so with less fury. Ah no! the doctor was telling truth.

She stole along beside the bed till she was within reach of his forehead. What was going on inside there? Was he picturing, like her, a life in which one never ran in the good sunshine or snow, but lay quite still under bed-clothes forever and ever? Such a life would be like a dream that ends of its own horror; its reality could not even be thought. Beside such misery, her own vital grief of the early morning was a shrunken trifle.

His left forearm lay across his breast. First, she leaned over to drop two kisses as soft as snowflakes, on the fingers where they escaped from the bandage; then she whispered at his ear "Julian dearie! Listen!—I'll love you forever!" As he seemed not to hear, she tried gently to draw away the arm that had been riveted so long across his eyes, as though to hold down tears struggling for air.



Well, after all she would rather, even for his sake, have found tears there than the hostile glare that frightened her almost into forgetting the blow with which he struck her away, that set her flying — poor, voiceless bobolink,— down the stairs and out into the bitter air.

CHAPTER V

DEALING WITH TREACHERY

If Mrs. Deming had seen the final exit of the Furness Boy from his father's house, she would doubtless have drawn gratifying assurance that in views on chastening, she and Providence were at one. Luckily, the witnesses were few and one at least was sympathetic — a little girl at an upper window, who cried, not so much because her Knight had not let her come to him before he went, as because she knew the reason why. He was staggering through the first steps of his chastening with a most healthy-minded bad grace, so that even Reverend Mother was appalled. "Don't ye be grieving, however," Sister Isidore comforted, with an arm about Reverend Mother's ample waist. "Dear heart! it 's just to bother the likes of yourself that the Divil will be lodging in other folks, for it 's so little ye 're acquainted with his ways, he knows ye 're aisy teased, and loves the sport." But Zandrie knew that she herself could have no such excuse for grieving; the Devil and she were too old friends!

In spite of Julian's refusal to see her, her faith in

his intention to take her away was unshaken. It was possible and even probable that Dr. Summers's news had stunned him into a moment's forgetfulness of all else; but, as he had said himself, the hospital was near, and he would be expecting her there. Otherwise he would doubtless have seen her this morning: in spite of the blasphemous, Heaven-defying rage that had lasted over night, to Reverend Mother's so sore dismay; in spite of the Devil in league with pain, he would have let her come to arrange about her flight. For, flight it must probably be, since Sister Angela had said not a word about her talk with him and had doubtless refused to consider his proposition. So far from being dismayed by that fact, however, Zandrie hoped that she had refused, clandestine departure being more to her taste. And once away, small fear of recapture, for Julian wanted her, and where was the nun who could keep Julian from his heart's desire? Together, he and she could defy ten sisterhoods.

Mail was brought to the Priory twice a week and thrust through a slip into a box fastened to the inside of the big gate. On the morning after Julian's going, the Prioress showed Zandrie the hook where the key to the box hung, in token that she was appointed mail carrier between the gate and the convent, and the honor thawed her for the moment out of a resolution to run away that day. Over night, she had decided that her first visit to Julian at the hospital should be, not a mere preparation for later flight, but her final

good-by to St. Scholastica's. It was certainly the simplest course. Touched, however, by Reverend Mother's mark of esteem, she would now stay perhaps three days longer, so as to leave behind not too evil a fame. But a glance at the contents of the mail box dislodged even the remembrance of this resolve, for there were two envelopes with the same handwriting and with the postmark of the same town in Massachusetts, and one was addressed to the Mother Superior and the other to Julian.

That afternoon found her tramping along the road to town, Julian's letter in her pocket, the ten dollar gold piece in her shoe, where it felt like a Midas-touched turnip, and under one arm a bundle of carefully chosen apparel, including the collar of Launcelot the deceased. The peach tree by the wall had again served for a ladder. At every sound of wheels, she plunged recklessly into the snow-laden bushes, till, coming upon a long stretch without a single sheltering shrub or tree, whom must she meet but Dr. Summers.

"Hello, young snowdrift!" he thundered, reining in. "Going to town to see your feller? Footing it all the way? Quite a bit yet to the hospital. Know the road? Better hop in by me; going that way myself presently."

She declined graciously but firmly. Since his discomfiture of two days before, she felt little awe of him.

"Know the road?" he repeated. "Why hello!"

and he pointed with his whip at her bundle, "bless us if that is n't a shoe sticking out there — and a little pettie! Looks mighty like a run-away! Mum 's the word?"

Zandrie agreed that mum was the word; whereupon he winked and drove on — the faithless rascal — towards the convent.

She was not Julian's only visitor this morning. To her profound disgust, there was already by his bedside a prodigiously stout lady in a black satin waist that creaked with her every breath. As she completely filled the only chair in the little room, Zandrie sat down on the foot of the bed, very gently, yet "Careful! careful!" the lady panted — pronouncing it "caffle."

Julian meanwhile had given her no word of greeting — scarcely even a sign of recognition — staring straight up at the ceiling in unmitigated silence. There was a curious, sullen smoulder in his eyes, quite different from anything she had seen there before. The massive lady, who seemed not to have noticed it, bore the omission of introductions with fine equanimity, asking Zandrie her name, and, after a pause, announcing her own to be Mrs. Deming. Then she turned to her unresponsive host. "As I was saying, the ways of the Lord are past finding out." She said it in a bass voice and with conviction.

He did not contradict her.

"Julian," said Zandrie, "guess what I 've got in my

pocket." She had left the bundle of clothes outside the door.

"I believe," the lady went on, gathering herself up to go with majestic absence of haste, "I believe all of us need chastening now and then — even ministers of the Lord. Yes, I believe that! Though of course I am not so — so bigoted, of course, as to believe in a direct — er — ratio between church attendance and such severe chastening as —"

"I am!" Zandrie proclaimed; and Julian's frown relaxed a little, so that though he still refused to meet her eyes, she sighed with relief.

"She does n't understand," Mrs. Deming said — and was quite right. "Little girls should n't interrupt. As we were saying; — of course I am not so bigoted as — as that; yet at the time when you wholly refused to attend worship except upon conditions,— even at that time I could n't help feeling — You 'll forgive my speaking to you as a mother? — you 're still such a very young man. I thought to myself at that time —"

"Oh, he is n't young!"

"A very uncontrolled, disrespectful little girl," the deep, unruffled voice went on. "I 'm afraid she tires you. As I was saying —"

"Julian!" — Zandrie spoke with surpassing sweetness — "let's pretend this bed 's an automobile, and every one off it, cows in the road."

The silence that ensued might have been dramatic

but for the creaking of Mrs. Deming 's waist. "Don't be distressed on my account," she said with tactful serenity. "I am coming soon again, of course. Very often, in fact. And Mr. Deming as soon as his lumbago permits. We consider you as one of our parishioners, you know, on your father's account. He was such a loss — such an irredeemable loss to the church."

As she stood buttoning a large black glove and looking down at the son of the dead loss, though his face gave no invitation to sympathy, her own visibly softened. "Yes, I will come again very soon. And if there is anything you think of that you want, you 'll send for one of us? . . . I 've written my son George about you. We are all so sorry."

"Oh, oh!" Zandrie whispered under her breath, "take care!"

But Mrs. Deming was perfectly reckless. "Dr. Summers has told us, you know. It 's a very hard lot. Very hard. But if you can bear it in patience and trust of the Lord's mercy — he is very merciful . . ." She was actually bending as though to kiss him good-by!

"Damned merciful," said the Furness boy before the kiss could reach him.

That it never reached him perhaps goes without saying.

But even after the door had shut — with unmajestic haste — he scowled still; and the guest who stayed

pouted in bewilderment. For how could one sulk after such a triumph of profanity? Why, it had all but shocked herself — Zandrie!

As the moment propitious for a certain announcement about a bundle of clothes had evidently not arrived, she delivered the letter, which, after reading it in a silence betokening small interest and less pleasure, he handed back.

"I can read it?"

No answer, which she took for consent.

It gave an address, 102 Elm street, and then began: "My dear, dear Julian,"— hey, what was this! — "A letter just received from our old friend, Mrs. Summers, tells me of your plight. You blessed child! Yes, I know you 're grown up now and right tall too, but I 've not seen you since that happened,— not since you visited us and liked the singing of the bobolinks. But your father wrote me something about how big and strong and wicked you were getting to be, spending ever so much more time with horses than Greek, and how you looked more like me than any one else; since which I 've been more anxious than ever to see you, of course! And now I 'm coming as soon as I can arrange about leaving the twins, to fetch you home with me. You will come, dear, won't you? Since your uncle's death we have been pretty lonely here. Marsh and Lee are almost as wild to see you as I, your very loving aunt, Emily Marshall Wyndam."

Zandrie exclaimed in dismay at this obstacle to her own designs on Julian's person. "You don't *want* to go, do you?"

"Not enthusiastic." In fact, his loving aunt would not have felt flattered.

Zandrie smiled happily. "Who are Marsh and Lee?"

"Twins, of course."

"How old?"

"Don't know," he snapped. "Babies — five or six. Something of that sort."

"How cunning! But they 'd bother perhaps — boy-twins that age. O surely you 'd rather —" But his mood still looked inauspicious.

"Rather what?"

But while she debated wistfully, a gust of pain that tore out the first groan she had ever heard from him, settled the business. She jumped to his side, her hands locked against her throat, for at first there was nothing she could do. At last, "Water!" he whispered, breathless as though after a run. And then, after she had given it and disposed of her tears, she slipped into the chair and drew it close. "Lucky, Mrs. Cow-in-the-Road was out of it!" And then, "You don't want any one around but me anyway, do you? You don't want to visit any old Aunt Emily Marshall Wyndams, with twins especially! And I don't want to go there anyway. We 'll have more fun alone, always. We won't even have a nurse around,

for I can open your letters for you and take care of you so nicely. And we 'll live in a little house and pretend from morning to night; and I 'll put little red curtains in the windows and cook gingerbread and mix raspberry shrub. I 'll do all the cooking, in fact. And sometimes perhaps we 'll invite poor Mam'selle for a visit, and Mickie too. Mickie swore like a trooper, but he could n't hold a candle to you, I reckon. Papa discharged him because he smelt so of beer, but you would n't mind that? I loved him dreadfully. Julian *dearie!* you 're not listening!"

It was true; and the object of his attention was no other than the convent chaplain, Father Thomas, standing in the door-way. Startling though the apparition was, Zandrie clapped a hand on Julian's shoulder and presented a bold front.

Father Thomas was not a garrulous man. Without a word, he took her by the arm. But she wrenched away, and, leaning over, dropped her great news in Julian's ear: "My clothes are all out in the hall in a lovely bundle. I 've come to stay forever!"

But the expected smile never came.

"Tell him —" Zandrie pleaded, "tell him to go. If we 're going to live together, of course we ought to begin right now when you need me so. They all ought to see that." She wheeled on the foe. "Father, I 'm going to stay, whether Sister Angela says so or not. Of course she said no when he asked. That 's why



I had to run away. But he wants me, and so — Julian! tell him that you —"

Her voice dropped, for his hand had shot out to push her away.

"Good heavens, Zandrie! What does it mean? I thought —"

"Mean?" she echoed.

His voice was harsh doubtless because he was troubled for her. "You don't mean you think that you — After what Dr. Summers told? You were there, I think. When I asked Sister Angela, it was before that — when I thought I was — like other men. I did n't know what I was saying."

"You mean you don't want me —"

"*Now?* After what Dr. Summers said? Of course not!" He had turned his face away. "Of course not!" he repeated sharply. "Take her away!"

At that she began to understand — so she thought. Two days had changed her friend and knight into a traitor — a sullen traitor without pity for the havoc he wrought.

A surge of grief lifted her for the second out of her childhood. Turning slowly to the priest, she lifted a finger and pointed it at Julian. "He is a liar!"

It was not until she had picked up the bundle of clothes and was half way down the corridor, holding Father Thomas's hand, that the sobs came.

CHAPTER VI

EXPLAINING HOW BOBOLINKS MAY COME TO BE AMONG RAVENS

Of course Sister Isidore's account of how an emphatically secular young man came to enter a nunnery, is as detailed as one could wish or endure. But when Zandrie tried to tell that young man how she happened to be there herself — well, what does one expect of a bobolink but just such a scrappy, loose-jointed performance? Her likeness to the giddy black-and-white bird must have been striking, by the way, if Julian saw it even by twilight.

She forgot to mention, for instance, that her father's family tree grew in Ireland, or that its top branches were bristling with the stiffest of Protestant twigs,— though this item appears hardly to explain her presence in a most Catholic sisterhood, either. It would have seemed more to the point if she had told him how her father, so far from being a stiff-necked Protestant, rather plumed himself on a sweet-tempered scepticism which he called tolerance. When his brother Jason came to America, for instance, and fell in love with the niece of a Catholic bishop, he merely

wrote him a letter of good-natured raillery; and when Jason married her and became a devout Romanist himself, he laughed. There was a drachm of contempt, to be sure, in the laugh. But six months later, he married a Romanist himself — his new sister-in-law's cousin, whom he had met at Jason's wedding — and promised easily enough that his children should be brought up in their mother's faith. Why not? One form of religion was as harmless as another. And he kept his promise too, though his wife died at the birth of their first child, and by the time that the little girl had grown up and taken religious vows and become Sister Angela, Sub-Prioress of St. Scholastica's, he had lost some of his cheerful tolerance. The germ of stiff-necked Protestantism had developed, in fact, into something sturdy enough to build a spiked wall between himself and his brother. For Sister Angela was at that time his only child, and he held Jason responsible for what he was pleased to call her suicide.

It was true that Jason and his wife had been more than godparents to the motherless little girl during the years when her father was traveling on his mining business; and that she picked up somehow, somewhere, a remarkably Catholic education. But in those days her proficiency in saint-lore amused him vastly. It was not till fourteen years later, when she and her cousin Mary had become nuns at St. Scholastica's, that he cursed Jason and all Catholics living.

To be sure, poor Alexander could ill spare his daughter; whereas Jason had two besides Mary,— to whose memory, by the way, St. Scholastica's owed its great gate. But of the other two daughters, one died soon after Mary had taken her vows, and the other married and moved to Australia, leaving Jason practically as childless as his brother. That fact removed at least the spikes from the wall between them. And after the death of Jason's wife, it became low enough to be climbed; and Alexander himself climbed over now and then — at least till the coming of Miss Antoinette Bonneau.

She was a Virginia belle, very proud of her Huguenot blood, and as fond as most of us of having her way. And she usually had it. When she met Mr. Alexander Donallon, for instance . . . He was twenty-three years older than she, but in spite of all that people said about her wanting him for his money — and he actually had made a small fortune in mining stocks — she probably married him just because he was still an uncommonly engaging fellow, ready to laugh at her wit as well as his own, as lavish of affection as of money, very self-sacrificing whenever another's need happened to catch his attention, absurdly impulsive even at fifty. He knew twenty-eight songs, which he sang in a ringing tenor, accompanying himself on a guitar with great gusto. And he wrote stories for half a dozen popular magazines,— under as many noms de plume. Why should n't Miss

Bonneau have liked him? During the first two years of their married life, they traveled together. Then Zandrie was born, and they settled in Baltimore.

On the rare occasions when Jason Donallon saw his new niece,— and he was never left alone with her for a minute — he pronounced her spoiled. But what did his opinion signify? her mother demanded. He, a judge of children? — a practically childless old man who divided his time between law and religion, and the Catholic religion at that — and the division being very uneven, moreover, in favor of that religion! "Why, I reckon he could trip up his own father confessor on his Breviary," she said; "and as for his fastings, he must be the most economical boarder in Maryland. *He* a judge of children!"

Yet Mam'selle herself once admitted in a pet, that he was right in pronouncing Mlle. Zandrie "affreusement spoil'." And really, when one considers, what else could one expect? . . . since her mother, being a spoiled child herself, could have no proper idea of discipline, and her father directed most of his energies to the spoiling business.

After her mother's death, when Zandrie was eight, she and he became great comrades. He used to wake her in the morning with little songs of his own making, such as

"Robin's caught a worm
And cooked it for the nest.

Robin got up early,
But Zandrie isn't dressed."

or —

"The sun is up, and the birdies sing
'Tee-cheep! O fie on a lazy thing!'"

And once it was —

"The pussy-cat climbed up the tree
And liked the view most thoroughly,
And never cried until he found
It rather hard to reach the ground."

Whereupon Zandrie bounced up, thinking that Launcelot was "stuck" in the cherry tree. "O no," her father said, "— no more than you and I. That was just a little moral tale."

Whatever she demanded of him, she got, though on a certain condition that became a formula at last — a ceremony. "Promise," it began, "that you'll never, never —"

"Be Catholic," she would interrupt in her usual prodigious hurry. "Promise never, never, *never!* NOW!" At which point the rubric called for terrific embrace, followed by instant fulfillment.

For, Jason's fanaticisms and austerities of life had come to typify, to his brother's mind, the religion that had drawn Sister Angela to what he called her death of mind and heart. "To renounce one's right of

judgment and will, to the glory of God," he said, " is the deepest insult one can pay to God." When his first daughter took the veil and " her life," the iron entered his soul. He would take care that his younger fell into no danger.

Yet he died without appointing a guardian. Perhaps as with other ardent lovers of life, the idea that he was really to die some day, had never caught his attention. To the surprise of all but his bankers, he died in debt.

Jason, meanwhile, had amassed a goodly sum of which he spent little, and had made a will, too, before Alexander's death, bequeathing half his fortune to his daughter in Australia, and the rest to St. Scholastica's. But he was willing enough to provide the means of subsistence and soul's salvation for his brother's little girl,— given the medium; and Sister Angela became the medium. Her Priory was already in Mr. Jason Donallon's debt for its triple-arched gate; it may have had inklings of future indebtedness; and Sister Angela was in a position of authority. So it was not improper that her sister should be allowed to board at the Priory, at its benefactor's expense, during the short vacations granted by a convent school.

And so it comes about quite simply, after all, that the daughter of Alexander Donallon calls herself, in her dramas of the Knight, " Zandrie of the Convent."

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CHAPTER VII

CHIEFLY AT OUR LADY'S

That high wrath in which she parted from her Knight, melted into grief the third day after. For on that day Uncle Jason had dropped from the sky into Father Thomas's cottage, and transported her to a certain Academy of Our Lady of Ransom.

Life promised to become a stirring affair at this rate; for when one counted the days carefully on a calendar, it appeared that she had been at St. Scholastica's only three weeks and a half on St. Polycarp's day, which was the day of Julian's coming; and only six weeks and two days when she was haled away to school.

"I 'd just as lief go with you," she told Uncle Jason, "and I 'd just as lief never come back." But this extremity of listlessness was due to an encounter with Sister Angela, who had refused to pack any of Zandrie's treasures in the suitcase that was receiving her concise outfit, and finding the gold eagle, had enclosed it in an envelope labeled "Property of my sister A. O. D. Her father's last birthday gift to her," and put it away. The battle over the collar of

Launcelot ended ingloriously, too. So the healing words of Sister Isidore were sorely needed; "Mind what I told ye now about your friend — Julius? It 's always upside-down a name comes in my head. Mind then,— he was all in the right, poor soul. It 's just because he was loving ye so — which ye 'll be understanding better when ye 're old as me."

And because her conviction was catching, or because wrath against Sister Angela left room for no other, her anger against Julian fell away and on the way to the station she sat up firmly in the coupé, announcing that she would say good-by to him.

"To what?" Her uncle was reading Poiré's "Triple Crown of the Mother of God." But when her eloquence had compelled his attention, the result of his final words — and they were very final — compelled the attention of passers by; for Zandrie wept. To be accurate, she bawled. And Uncle Jason, thrusting the "Triple Crown" into a pocket, said "damn," very softly, but for the first time since his August retreat.

Yet, although thwarted in a spoken apology to Julian, she could write it.

"Academy of Our Lady of Ransome,
Feb. Eleventh,

"JULIAN DEARY,

"I am sorry I was so passionite and sinfull and impollite and won't you please write and say you excuse me, I think you were so good to want me at all and Sister Isidoor says

you were quite wright to change your mind after what Doc. Summers told you though I can't see why at all, but she was very pozitive. I am at bording school (but it is a convent too) and I like it better than at St. Sckolasticha's only we all have to wear black unaforms no matter whether anyone is dead or not and I would like to see someone in a red dress, I would like a pink dress when I get over morning for Papa. We wear white vails to Sunday Mass. I like compisition but not arrithemetic, I have french with the big girls because Mlle. was French and Mama's ansisters too, and I know it all but the awfull gramar. It is very strict here but perhaps I will be good if you tell me too. I *do* love you Julian deary but I must stop now.

"Your Loving,

"No. 73.

"P. S. We have nombers here and I am 73.

"Your Loving,

"ALEXANDRA OWEN DONALLON."

The envelope, directed to "Mr. J. Furnis, At the Hospitle,"— town and state duly indicated — was dropped into Our Lady's mail-box, unsealed as the rules order. Another clause in the prospectus reads that "visits and correspondence outside the immediate family are not allowed without permission from parents or guardians, and the sanction of the Institution," — according to which, the letter to Mr. J. Furnis was enclosed in a respectful request to Mr. J. Donallon to forward it if he saw fit. And he saw fit — perhaps by way of expiation for that violence in the coupé.

An answer arrived a month later, but the superscription gave the street and New England town that

headed the letter to Julian which she had read at the hospital, and was in fact from the same person.

"DEAR ZANDRIE,

"It is so hard for Julian to write, I am doing it for him. I am his aunt, by the way, and have brought him up north here, to live with us — my two little boys and me. In the first place, he wants me to assure you that there is nothing to excuse. You were good to him always, he says, and he will never forget you. I wish you were here, for it is easy to see that his hard lot grows harder to bear, every day. He was such an active boy! And he can never ride again, or even walk except with crutches,— all the surgeons say so. Is n't it *dreadful!* I was never sorrier for anybody, or more at a loss how to help. The other day I had the bright idea that he might amuse himself learning the violin; but to-day the doctor told me that his left wrist that he broke so badly, is going to be too stiff. He never has cared much for reading, and I am at my wits' end. I do hope the Sisters will let you write again.

"Yours affectionately,

"EMILY MARSHALL WYNDAM."

There was an enclosure which she kissed — "Dear Zandrie, I love you too. J. M. F." But she kissed it in the privacy of her curtained alcove after the dormitory lights were out, so no one knew of the scandal.

A file of bulletins reporting Miss Donallon's progress at Our Lady's was found among her guardian's documents; and their incontestable evidence shows arithmetic to have been a stumbling-block. Latin grammar, little better. French and German conversa-

tion, on the other hand, make a proud showing. Church history leaves much to be desired; but English and Universal Mediæval histories are marked high, spelling rises slowly but steadily, and English composition soars. On the June bulletin of the fourth year, it is even starred with a note: "We consider her productivity of imagination and fluency of diction above the ordinary. She has actually composed a small drama which her classmates performed before the School last week."

During the first six months, that productivity of imagination had employed itself in the devising of naughtiness, Julian having issued no commands to the contrary. Then, doubtless by virtue of that fluency of diction, she was promoted to Sister Andrea's rhetoric class, which was really for Big Girls only — twelve years old at the least! — and the affection that blazed in Zandrie's heart for that impassive lady was only as inexplicable as it was fervent. And while her power lasted, the nun used it to good purpose. But she lost it later, partly through her own fault, partly through the advent of a new influence in the small person of Miss Annabel Bean, aged sixteen, come for a "finishing year" at Our Lady's.

The day after her coming, Miss Bean announced her intention of hearing no more masses — not to the school authorities, to be sure, but to a circle of Big Girls including Zandrie.

To think that Zandrie of the Convent is a Big Girl already!

Miss Bean explained that she was a Protestant, and not going to mass for anybody, if she *was* the only non-Catholic — she swelled visibly — in the whole school.

"But you 're not!"

The girls wheeled on Zandrie. "Who 's another?"

"I am!"

Exclamations, protests, laughter, buzzed about her.

"I 'm not a Catholic." Her cheeks burned. "I 'd — I 'd forgotten!"

"But you were baptized as soon as you came."

"You 're going to be confirmed at Easter,— Sister Praxedes says so."

"You say your rosary."

"Because I love the dear Virgin," said Zandrie, tears in her eyes now.

"And you 'd be a heretic if you did n't! Annabel 's a heretic."

"*All* Protestants are n't heretics," said Zandrie. "Sister Andrea said so."

"O—h—h, but they are! Sister Praxedes said so yesterday at Christian Instruction!"

"I did n't hear her," said Zandrie.

"You never listen,— you said you did n't."

"You 're always writing stories in your head."

"Sister Andrea may be a heretic herself!" This

unlawful suggestion became a bone of contention from which Zandrie slipped away. She was trembling, poor child.

For, had she really broken her promise to her father and turned Catholic after all?

It was true that she had been baptized at Our Lady's; but true also that she had eyed the operation with extreme disfavor, inasmuch as Uncle Jason had been sponsor. "Will it make me Catholic?" she had asked. But they said no,— only a child of God and Holy Church.

"You can love the Blessed Virgin and sit at mass and say your prayers," Sister Andrea once said, "without being a Catholic." And by dint of avoiding antagonism and quieting fear, Sister Andrea had put questions to sleep at last.

Yet not all the credit belongs to the Sister, either, for there was a certain radiant person besides, with whom Zandrie was always galloping on horseback through shifting landscapes that one never quite saw, or passing through splendidly improbable adventures in a palace built of sunsets,— always during those Christian Instructions that seemed such heaven-sent opportunities for writing stories in one's head! The Radiant Person's name was Julian, of course; but she never spoke it to any one — no, never! — though he was the chief of all her dream persons, and as responsible as Sister Andrea for her having forgotten a promise to her father.

"*Was* my father a real heretic?" she asked Sister Andrea now.

Well, yes, said the nun,— if he wilfully refused to profess the Faith, and hated Catholics really.

But those words, "profess the Faith," brought a sudden vivid memory. Julian himself did not profess the Faith, for she had heard Sister Angela say so under circumstances that left no room for doubt! So he was doomed to eternal fire too! "I do wish every one were Catholic!" she sobbed; "but *I* can't be one. I promised and promised."

And then Sister Andrea made a *faux pas,* which was the beginning of her loss of power; for she tried to explain that Zandrie's promise was not binding.

Zandrie lay awake far into the night, convincing herself that for all that the nuns might say, a promise was a promise! And when she fell asleep, it was upon a great resolve. If her father and mother — and Julian — were heretics, she would share their lot. Perhaps, considering how much she would really have liked to be a Catholic, the Virgin could arrange for some exceptions in her favor, allowing her, for instance, to relieve in little ways the future sufferings of those lost souls she loved. She would begin to-morrow to offer a thousand rosaries for that one intention. But in any case . . . Well, it is plain enough that Zandrie was a heroine. The thousand rosaries alone prove that!

Miss Annabel Bean, graciously ignoring the fact

that Zandrie was two years younger, now became her inseparable companion,— though the phrase is a very wild poetic license, the Powers allowing Our Lady's pupils just about one hour of free intercourse a day. The December bulletin to Mr. Donallon has a note in Sister Praxedes' writing: "The deplorable decline in deportment we believe due to an undesirable influence on the part of a new pupil, which we are striving to check. We fear, however, that Miss Donallon is incapable of long-sustained effort in any one direction." And in one of the letters found with the file of bulletins, the Sister Principal has written — with what knitting of brows under her white coif, one can imagine —" We have directed our attention most conscientiously to her spiritual needs, hitherto with apparent success. The idea of resistance has reappeared, however, chiefly in the form of opposition to confirmation, and though we find it difficult to deal with, we are employing our utmost of tact, and pray for ultimate success. It seems best, meanwhile, to postpone the confirmation until she is in that state of heart "— et cetera. The perplexities of the Sister Principal were never few. They multiplied grievously, that year.

Early in May, Uncle Jason wrote the first letter that his ward ever received from him:

"My Dear Niece:—

"Noting the continuance of unsatisfactory reports, I wish, without emphasizing the obligation under which you stand

to myself, to express my disappointment. You may recall that, in my pleasure with those former good reports, I promised, last June, the reward of a pink dress. I think it best to abide by that promise, at the same time deploring the necessity for having had to consider its withdrawal. I will instruct the Superioress to delegate some one to attend to the purchase of the gown."

But this was also his last letter to her, for six weeks later, on the night of the Vigil of John the Baptist, he was found dead at his prie-Dieu.

It is due to his naughty niece to record that, though she had seen him hardly a dozen times in her life, she shed two tears of contrition to every one of regret for the pink dress which must now be exchanged for black. And that means that she was very contrite indeed. In spite of Miss Bean's assurance that Protestants never, never said rosaries, she offered twenty-five very carefully for his soul, and resolved in honor of his memory to amend her ways. Whether the resolve would have borne fruit at Our Lady's, can never be known; for Uncle Jason, it seems, had not changed that will which bequeathed half his property to his daughter in Australia and the other half to St. Scholastica's; and the superiors of the Priory agreed that, after four and a half years of the most Catholic education that Our Lady's afforded, a home in their own retreat house was the most that a penniless ward had a right to expect. A novena of masses was being sung for Uncle Jason's soul when Zandrie came to that home in June.

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN BOBOLINKS FLY NORTH

Now for a leap over two and a half years, into the middle of the office of Dr. Summers, who is to be yet more startled presently by Zandrie, who has come to consult him about her soul. And he has never believed in souls, as every one knows.

"I 'm the little girl from St. Scholastica's," she announces, "— grown up! Remember? — though it was seven whole years ago, to be sure."

"Bless my soul," says the doctor who does n't believe in souls, "— the little run-away!"

"And I 've run away this afternoon,— without climbing the peach tree by the wall, though, for Father Thomas's gate was unlocked and I just stepped out while he was giving Reverend Mother the Holy Viaticum — for she 's really dying, poor soul. She has a Catholic doctor of course, but I 've come to you just because they said you were n't Catholic."

"Er — no," says the doctor, "I 'm not."

"Nor I!"

But he received this revelation unmoved.

"You see," she said, "I 've got to be a heretic, so

I 'd better be finding out a little more about it. I *can't* give up the Blessed Virgin; but I 'd like to be heretical in all other ways. If you don't mind telling me all *you* believe —"

The doctor, seeing her very much in earnest, bounced up from his chair, instead of bellowing with laughter, as he afterwards told the Reverend George Deming that he was about to do. "My dear young lady, you — I 'm afraid you 've come to the wrong party!"

"You mean you 're Catholic after all?"

"God bless us, no!" He frowned frightfully. "I 'm a fine, well-browned, triple-baked heretic, that 's all. Always glad to meet another!"

"Of course," says Zandrie gravely, "I hate hell. In fact, if I think about it at all, it makes me unhappy — Oh, very! — so that last year I almost gave in to being confirmed. But then I took heart again, and made a scene." She smiled contentedly. "But if I 'm going to hell at all, I may as well go for a mighty good reason. And a heretic friend of mine could only say that she did n't pay much attention to saints or His Holiness — or the Blessed Virgin! And I love to say rosaries to the dear Virgin; so you see I 've come —"

But here the doctor wheeled on her. "My dear young lady! You must excuse me, but this is my office hour and I — you understand — patients waiting. But I — I 'm quite the wrong fellow, anyhow." But perhaps her disappointment penetrated the hedge of

his dismay, for, "Look here," he added, "I would n't worry much about — about this hell business. Not a bit. *I* don't! In fact . . . In fact, I 'll stake my hat on there not being any hell — for anybody."

She pondered this new and pleasant suggestion. "Annabel Bean believed in hell."

"Sorry to hear it."

"And Annabel was a heretic — a Protestant."

"No doubt. But for my part — you see, I differ somewhat from most heretics in not putting much stock in hell, or in heaven either."

"Nor purgatory?"

"Nor purgatory. Bless my soul. I should hope not!"

A profound pause; at the end of which Zandrie murmured "Saints defend us!" simply because she had no breath for more. At this rate heresy might prove more than she bargained for!

The doctor meanwhile paced the floor like a caged bear. "Hold up!" he said at last. "You 'd rather not be a Catholic — that 's your point?" And when she had nodded very gravely, he snatched up his telephone receiver. "Nine one. Hello! George Deming? Busy, George? . . . Well, whatever you 're doing, don't do it! I 've got a case for you — more in your sky-line. Young woman from Priory. Tired of popery. Wants a change. Anxious to be a heretic but does n't know how. Came to me! Footed it all the way in town. . . . No, not dressed like

one. Too young, anyhow . . . Hey? . . . Don't know, but — used to see her there when I attended Furness. Sort of ward of one of the superiors, come to remember. Patients impatient in waiting room, or I 'd . . . All right, that 's the boy!"

And so it came about that Zandrie and young George Deming, who married the daughter of Dr. Summers, met for an epoch-making discussion of how not to be a Catholic. For in spite of having won fifty dollars on a race, by the Furness Boy's aid, George had been a settled parson for four years, and now actually occupied his father's old pulpit in the First Presbyterian Church.

As the doctor opened the door to let her out, "Poor Furness," he had remarked, "— no more visits from runaways now. I reckon they don't grow up there in New England." And she would have liked to ask if he had had any news of Julian. But he was in too much of a hurry; and an hour later, she had forgotten the remark — for the time, at least. For that interview with the Reverend George was interesting. In fact, when she got back to the convent, it was with her brain awhirl and a heart that might well beat fast, considering that tucked quite close to it under her cape was a certain pamphlet that had neither a bishop's "Imprimatur" nor a censor's "Nihil Obstat" on the back of its title page. It was a pamphlet not in "Our Lady's" library nor on the retreat-house book-shelves. In fact, it was a pamphlet that good Catholics seldom

read. To be wholly frank, it was "Popery Disclosed; Six Sermons by the Rev. John Deming, M.A." No wonder that Sister Bobolink's heart beat faster than usual, even though the sun had set and her cape was large and Father Thomas's gate was still unlocked and no one met her on the stairs nor could possibly see when she tucked something under the mattress of her little room on the third floor of the retreat-house.

Before dawn, next morning, she awoke to a guilty consciousness of an unusual sound — of a bell tolling — the big bell, that seldom rang except for the beginning of the great silence each evening at eight, when its voice was solemn enough, goodness knew! At this gray time of the morning, it was completely awful. It was as the voice of a godly giant on whose white garment an outrageous spot has been disclosed; a voice proclaiming scandal — abomination; a protesting, accusing voice, hoarse with horror. Yet it was only the passing-bell for Reverend Mother, whose death so filled the thoughts of her nuns that the most glaring heresies might probably have strutted the cloister walks in full daylight, without attracting notice. But none the less, Zandrie felt under her mattress to make sure that IT was there. "Popery Disclosed"! O saints, avert the lightning! — or discovery by Sister Petronilla, or the Pious Ladies!

Sister Petronilla, being guest mistress, sometimes penetrated the retreat-house bed-rooms, though even

she seldom came up to the third floor. But the Pious Ladies were two permanent boarders in the house, and one of them lived in the very room next Zandrie's. Luckily, she was much engaged in praying a short cut through purgatory, spending hours and hours in the chapel, and paying little heed to her neighbor — especially since the other Pious Lady had set the pace at snubbing Zandrie.

The snubbing business, by the way, had begun after Zandrie's making friends with "Mother" McClung, the deaf house-keeper and cook, with whom she was learning to talk with her fingers. At first the Pious Ladies had vied with each other in petting her. In fact, the poor souls made their retirement from the world endurable only by dint of such rivalries and daily squabbles. But Zandrie soon fled from their jealous favors, to her silent friend. Whereupon, seeing her so taken up with a person of low degree, the Pious Lady who lived on the second floor tossed her head and snubbed her; so that the lady of the third floor, not to be outdone in love or war, had to snub her a little more. And then Zandrie, being an illogical person — as any one can see with half an eye, even without reading as far as this — what does she do but fly into a rage with each Pious Lady in turn, and run in silly tears to Mrs. McClung, the cause of the trouble. And yet not all the cause, perhaps, for the Pious Ladies may have gotten wind of the fact

that Zandrie was not a boarder, after all, but only a contemptible object of charity. How could they know that she had even a ten dollar gold-piece?

To tell the truth, she herself had forgotten that wealth till the fall after leaving Our Lady's, when Sister Angela had died and a gold-piece was found in her desk, in an envelope labeled "Property of my sister A. O. D. Her father's last birthday gift to her." And Reverend Mother had given it back, bidding A. O. D. to keep it carefully. And at that time, Zandrie had kissed it in contrition for having forgotten, and believed she would never spend it. But about that, she was destined to change her mind.

Sister Angela's death had been a momentous event in the Priory, for she was in high honor. No one had known of her malady till she fainted at lauds, one gray dawn. And three weeks later, the passing-bell had rung as it was ringing for Reverend Mother now. But the only tears that Zandrie had shed then, had been for sorriness that she could not be more sorry. For how could she grieve much for the going of one who had pressed all the love that her nature yielded, into a propitiatory offering to the Invisible, neither asking nor receiving love from the little sister whose soul she had tried to save? The fact that Sister Angela's cell was empty, made life neither a more nor a less lonely affair for Zandrie.

And in spite of Mother McClung, it was appallingly lonely. How else? For the only persons who ever

spoke to her were,— first, two elderly deaf mutes — and McClung himself was rheumatic as well as deaf, and of very uncertain temper; secondly, two quarrelsome old ladies, who ought not to count after all, since, after the snubbing began, they made a point of *not* speaking, so that Zandrie preferred to eat with her silent friends in the kitchen whenever McClung was in good humor. When he was not, he made strange little sounds in his throat that were worse than silence. As for the guests who came for their yearly retreat, they were silent perforce, and read their Manuals even at table. And then, there was Father Thomas, whom she eyed with profound distrust — for no other reason than that she did — and never spoke to when she could help it. And there was also his acolyte, living with him in the chaplain's little house; but he was studying for the priesthood so hard that he seemed to have grown underground and Zandrie called him Brother Turnip. Few words could she have exchanged with him if she had wanted — or even if he had wanted! And finally, there were the busy lay sisters and the nuns, whom she might speak to only when they came out for their decorous and questionable "recreation." For, since the first school vacation, she had lived in the retreat-house and not been allowed in the convent itself. So she had had little joy of Sister Isidore. And the genial Father Haggarty had failed her, having made his weekly visits of

yore only because he had been the director of the community before it moved to its new home; and Father Thomas was director now, and Father Haggarty came only for occasions like Sister Angela's funeral. As for the friends of "Our Lady's," the censorship of a convent school is hardly encouraging to a heart-to-heart correspondence. She had written to Annabel Bean, but got no answer. So it appears that life really must have been a lonely affair. And with the prospect of hell at the end of it all! Poor Sister Bobolink! No wonder she had preferred to be thorough in heresy — to be killed for a sheep than a lamb, since the killing was certain.

But since her talk with the Reverend George Deming, it had seemed a bit less certain. That was one of the wonders that she pondered through the day of Reverend Mother's death, and that tumbled the hours of the long office into a few delirious minutes. But although Father Haggarty was at hand and she was bursting to ask questions which would have made his eyes open — as wide, at least, as their casing of fat allowed — she kept her own counsel, for so her new director had advised, after a certain brow-puckering pause.

For three weeks, then, she helped Mother McClung about the house and hemmed napkins for Sister Rose of the linen closet, all in a fever of guilty excitement, which yet no one seemed to notice. No; no one seemed to suspect at all that within the most Catholic

Priory of the exemplary Scholastica lay hidden — we know what. Zandrie was saying five rosaries a day in propitiation of the outraged saint. She was even forgetting to write stories in her head about the radiant person called Julian, which signifies better than anything else, her distracted state. For of late, those stories had made the most real reality of her life, and all its joy. In proportion as her outer world had grown barren of delight, she had turned to the inner world of her own making, using much that she had found in the former, but interweaving it more and more with shreds of dreams, till at last she herself could not tell which threads were which. If Mr. Wilton Furness, for instance, could have met in Zandrie's cloud palace that person she called Julian, it is very doubtful whether he would have recognized his own son. But who would read the absurdities of that palace business, even if any one had the meanness to disclose them? Enough that they were as absurdly delightful as most of our dreams. And she even had the excuse that one of hers had come true — one afternoon when she had perched on a wall and seen Julian ride past in the sunlight.

During her second visit to the Reverend George, he answered so many of those questions which she had almost asked Father Haggarty, so differently from the way that the Father would have answered — if he was at all fit to be a nunnery director — that the eternal fires began to look very distant, and heresy, more di-

verting than heroic. This was not wholly disappointing, however, since future heroisms were exchanged for the fine excitement of nearer dangers. If her excursions to town were discovered, for instance, the peach tree by the wall might be cut down, and Father Thomas's gate kept locked — which would certainly be exciting, since, having tasted the wine of escape, she intended to drink it henceforth by cupfuls,— yes, and in spite of the Reverend Mr. Deming himself. It was curious — the inconsistency of that gentleman who could batter down the infallibility of the pope and of Holy Church too; who called the lives of the Sisters "a base hiding in the coils of a shell called religion, from God's own work," and then — then, who sent a body back to a convent, bidding her not to run away again! He had meant it too, looking as eagerly perplexed but as determined as Mother Genevieve, the new Prioress. "And meanwhile," he had said, "I will pray for you." "I 'd rather come and talk with you," she said. But he was again very firm about that. But all that work to be done in the world — ought she not to be about it? — to begin at once on her own share? Not yet, he said; not until . . . Until when? she asked. Well, not until she was grown up. But she was seventeen last September, she argued, and it was March already. To which he merely said "Be patient." "I 've been as patient already," she pouted, "as Saint Stilytes. . . . I always hated Saint Stilytes!"

He escorted her to Father Thomas's front gate, and throughout their walk she tried to ask him if he knew anything about Julian; but her courage failed. Yet she had carried a work called "Popery Disclosed" into the retreat-house, and read it too! — and had dared to believe what it said, and to question the infallibility of His Holiness and the whole authority of Holy Church; had dared to think her own thoughts at last — or Mr. Deming's thoughts, but it made little difference which, since they were equally un-Catholic now. She had dared all this, and yet could not screw her courage up to the speaking of a name. Curious enough! "I 'll do it now," she thought when they reached the gate; but first she asked "I can still love the Blessed Virgin and be a good heretic, can't I?"

"Protestant?" he corrected, "— yes, it will do no harm so long as you love God better."

"I 'll try," she sighed. And then he said good-by and was gone, and in the fun of slipping through Father Thomas's garden and finding the gate in the convent wall unlocked, she forgot that she had not asked the questions about Julian after all.

"The sun is up and the birdies sing
'Tee-cheep! O fie on a lazy thing!'"

The foolish little song of her father's hopped into her head as she sat on the wall where she had perched

when Julian passed. The peach tree hid her from the convent windows because it was full of blossoms, over which the birds had lost their wits and would certainly soon be hoarse. But the sun was not yet so high that it more than spread a warmth through one's veins, and a tingling of desire for wings to carry one nearer to itself, or for — what? Who could tell what?

If he should pass again! She shut her eyes, to pretend that she heard a beat of hoofs. If he would pass just once more, that would be fun enough; for he would know her this time, although she was so grown up, and he would laugh a laugh that was good to hear, and she would drop to the ground and scramble up on his horse — a great sorrel, she remembered — and they would gallop together into the heart of the world, to find the work that Mr. Deming said waited each one of us. Why, Julian himself had spoken of some such work, in that talk with Sister Angela! He would help her in it, perhaps — would help her in all things — and she would wear a pink dress, and life would no longer be a bore, or lonely. "Oh," she whispered with her eyes shut, "what fun!"

But at last, because she could not make her ears hear the beat of hoofs, and because life of late had been such a really dreadful bore, she began to cry a little; and the tears felt so real that she called herself a silly child with a head full of dreams.

Julian would never ride past again — she knew it now — and because he would never ride anywhere

again. But it was very hard to realize, because the Radiant Person of the cloud palace was always so active. Even when she was merely remembering, she saw no sullen smoulder in the eyes of the face on Father Haggarty's pillow; and the face never lay there long. No; it was a task to make oneself believe — to know — that the real Julian somewhere there in the north of Massachusetts, must be sitting or lying quite still all day. Poor boy! Poor prisoner!

And here in her meditation something momentous happened, though nothing more prodigious than the thought that Julian perhaps was as lonely as herself. But it had never occurred to her before, and it shot in with certain others tumbling after, which, twenty minutes later, set her in motion towards the town.

She had not been there since her second talk with Mr. Deming, because the risk of discovery was not to be taken lightly, and she had not been able to think up a really good excuse. But at last a fine, stout one had presented itself and she pounced upon it, breathless with glee, prancing after wherever it might lead.

It took her straight to the railroad station, to ask the price of a ticket to a town in the north of Massachusetts. Supposing it were no more than ten dollars . . . She hugged patience to herself while the man at the window consulted a pamphlet, scribbled in pencil on the margin of a time table, then studied a book, and then — "Thirteen: thirty-five," he said, so dispassionately that she could n't believe he was saying

it to her. But he repeated it, looking at her over his spectacles.

"Could n't I possibly get one for ten?"

He convinced her patiently that she could not.

By the time that she reached Father Thomas's garden, the fun was almost spent, and none at all was left after Brother Turnip, come from serving mass, met her at the gate in the wall. Though he blinked with astonishment, he said never a word. And no one said a word. But the chaplain's gate was kept locked for the next four days.

Whether it was so faithfully locked after that, is of no concern to any one more interested in Zandrie than in Brother Turnip. For in spite of the impassive ticket man, her spirits rose with the sun, next morning; and for four days her wits wrought busily. On the fourth morning, when old McClung went to delve in the vegetable garden, she coaxed his wife to lend her three dollars and thirty-five cents. "I can't tell you what for now," she spelled on her fingers, "but I can pay it back soon, surely." And as the lay sisters often drove to town to do errands, Mrs. McClung doubtless assumed that Zandrie wanted them to buy something for herself — assumed it, at least, until she found a certain bit of paper in one of her sauce-pans and read thereon: "Dearest of dears, you are the only reason why I am not completely happy at going. You have been such an angel. I want awfully to tell you where I am going, and why; but as Mother Genevieve will ask

you, I don't want to make it hard for you. But you can tell every one that my reason for going was most excellent." O excellent indeed! — being sufficient even for the spending of her father's last gift.

Oh, the life out there in the world was a joyous business! Her eyes, straining to see through the convent wall, caught a glimpse of a hurry of colors, of a kaleidoscopic throng to which she stretched her arms in delight and hope, tired of white and gray and black and of measured movements. Her ears ached with weariness of the known. For, the chanting of women's voices at dawn, and the great silence bell; the march of black-veiled figures, two by two, carrying banners and burning tapers to the honor of some soft-named saint; matins and lauds and prime and none for names of the time of day, and dialogues of song in the place of speech — these were the commonplaces, the prose of life; and the road to town was the way to its poetry. And so on the evening of the first of May, with a little bundle of clothes again under her arm and a dance of sun-lit mists in her head, she mounted her peach tree by the wall and stepped out into the world to find the radiant person made of dream-woven memories, called Julian.

CHAPTER IX

CONTAINING A MOMENT OF SUSPENSE

She really could not ride in his carriage, she told the cabman, unless it happened to cost only fifteen cents, which was all the money she had left, and fifteen times as much as she might have had but for the lady from Washington and Mr. Fink.

Though she did not explain who these benefactors were, it is evident that she had more friends now than when she had left the convent.

"It *don't* happen to cost only fifteen cents," the cabman said; whereupon one of his fellows pushed him off the curbstone and offered to make a deal with her.

"You 're a rum one," said the first.

"Sure!" and the second opened the door of his hack. "Me for beauty in distress."

But his grin disconcerted her. In fact, she was a little frightened for the first time in her journey — and it was now almost the journey's end. "I 'd rather walk," she said, "— only is it *very* far to 102 Elm street?" That was the address at the head of the letters from Julian's aunt.

"Stranger here?" the second cabman asked. And at that, she turned suddenly to a red-nosed fellow lounging against the station wall, though how she knew that for all his wicked nose he would be her protector, is a mystery.

"You help me!" she said. And he not only swore in her defense, but took her in his cab without more parley. When they reached 102 Elm street, however, and he had helped her to dismount, "Tell you what," he said, rubbing his nose to a terrifying hue, "I think you meant to be square all right about this deal. I would n't of did this, you know, if I had n't thought that."

But she was eyeing the house in a fever of excitement. If Julian should happen to be looking out of a front window! . . . Would he know her? She had grown a good deal in seven years, and her hair was braided and turned up; but she wore a black dress with white collar and bow, very much like the one in which he had mistaken her for the portrait of a bobolink. Perhaps he would still call her Sister Bobolink; and she would certainly not stamp with rage. . . .

The hackman was touching her arm. "Look a-here. I said you was going to be square about this, was n't you?"

She smiled at him dreamily. "O yes indeed!"

"That 's how I thought; so I thought I 'd risk it, don't you see. You see what you owes me is fifty

cents, only I 'm willing to take fifteen now and let the rest wait over till you can pay up."

"Yes indeed, I can surely pay you later." Julian was not a window and perhaps it was as well — it would surprise him so deliciously when she just opened the door of his room and walked in . . .

"Well, but how and when?" the tiresome hackman was persisting.

"O please!"— and she took a step towards the house. "I 've borrowed a lot already, but —"

"Comin' here as hired help?"

"No; just to visit."

He looked at the house and then at her, and apparently concluded that she was telling the truth. "To stay a while?"

The question had not occurred to herself, and she laughed happily. "If they 'll have me; and I think they will. I may live here the rest of my life!"

Then he wrote her name in a dirty little book, and at last she was rid of him. In fact, he was out of sight before the maid opened the door of 102 Elm street. She was a crisp little maid in a ruffled apron and cap. "Mr. Furness?" she repeated cheerily, "— Mr. *Furness?* . . . Posi*tive*ly no such person!"— and she was for shutting the door, but Zandrie caught at the knob.

"He lives here with his aunt, Mrs. Emily Marshall Wyndam — and the twins."

"Positively no such persons. You could ask next door, maybe."

Zandrie stared at the closed door a full minute before turning away. The house on the right was for rent, but she rang at the one on the left, and another spruce maid said that she had heard many names in her life, but never a Furness or Wyndam. But she would inquire of the missis. And when she came back with the news that her mistress had lived here seven months and knew of no Mrs. Wyndam or Mr. Furness, Zandrie clasped her hands against her throat.

It is an awkward situation, without doubt, when one has stepped out of a convent to travel several hundred miles on thirteen dollars and thirty-five cents and a trusting hackman has just accepted one's last penny; when it is almost evening and one finds oneself adrift in a strange city, rather tired after a sleepless night, friendless and without so much as a suspicion that a device called a directory exists. The prospect of ringing several thousand door-bells was not cheering, yet seemed the only hope till the idea darted in, that possibly the hackman had made a mistake about the street — that perhaps this was not Elm street after all. She ran two blocks before she found a lamp-post with a sign.

And it was not till after she had been leaning against this lamp-post for five whole minutes and, if the truth must be told, crying softly into her handker-

chief, that help came. "Wot 's up?" it asked, and she was a little disconcerted at first to make out through her tears that it was a policeman; but she told him what was "up," bravely enough until she reached the proposition of the door-bells. "It seems as if I could n't ring every bell in town," she sobbed then, "and I shan't have time to before night anyway. And anyhow perhaps — perhaps he 's dead!" But the policeman's want of emotion at this suggestion was soothing in itself. "Guess he ain't moved as far as *that*," he said. "Ain't looked him up in the d'rect'ry yet, have ye?" And then when he had grasped the fact that she had not, and the reason why, "You foller me!" he commanded. And she followed, drying her eyes.

CHAPTER X

THE MAN IN THE CHAIR

Center street swarmed with men and girls, most of them carrying pails or leather colored boxes, at the moment when Zandrie took leave of her policeman, near the steps of number 55. It was a wooden house, nominally white, jammed in between a brick block of wholesale stores on the left, and a big building humming with machinery, on the right. In fact, it was not a house where, without the insistency of a directory and a policeman too, one would have looked for the former tenant of a cloud palace.

The door was opened by a woman in black, with the dolefullest fact that she had ever set eyes on. Dear saints! could it be his aunt? She wore no apron and did not look like a servant exactly. In her dismay, Zandrie forgot to speak.

"Don't you want anything at all?" the woman asked in a voice that matched her face.

"I 've come to see — your nephew."

"I have n't no nephews," was the dispassionate reply; whereupon Zandrie drew a sigh of relief.

"I mean Mr. Julian Furness. Is he here?"

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"I guess likely. He ain't much given over to gadding." This with a mirthless smile. "I 'll speak to him."

"No indeed! I want to surprise him!"

The woman merely raised her eyebrows; then she turned into the house.

His house! Zandrie's heart beat so that she hardly saw where she stepped, dimly aware of feeling her way up a narrow staircase through a darkness flavored with cabbage. His house! And she was to see him within the minute.

She clasped her hands, waiting for the sound of his voice.

"What is it?" The tones were impatient, but she knew them.

"It 's a girl," said the woman, whom Zandrie suddenly detested, and pushed aside, to open the door herself.

It was the door into the hall of her dream palace, where a king called Julian the Radiant was awaiting her. No wonder the child forgot her manners.

Poor Zandrie! The man there at the other end of the room, leaning back in a wheel chair and smoking a pipe, was such a plainly human being, clad in a citizen's suit of sombre gray, with a starched collar. He was even reading a newspaper — an institution that was eschewed in the palace as commonplace, not to say vulgar. Starched collars had given way to Byronic neck-gear; and as for any sort of smoking —!

But it was no laughing matter, and Zandrie, clinging to the door knob, stared at him as at a fearful stranger. It was as though a hand at her heart had turned a lever reversing every current of blood in her body. She seemed born with full consciousness into a new world.

Had she ever known him — that man in the chair? He was so old! And Julian and she had been comrades.

His eyes meanwhile greeted hers around the edge of his paper with amazed interrogation. Their disconcerting blue seemed the only positive color in his face, but this may have been because of the veil of smoke. Presently, as she continued to stand at the door wordless, he took the pipe out of his mouth. "You 've evidently made a mistake," he said; but however unfriendly the tone, it was a voice she had known. Yet, still too dismayed for speech, she looked away, and her glance took a confused inventory of his surroundings: of shelves of books and music, and, over one bookcase, a photograph of Rosa Bonheur's "Horse Fair"; of a table piled with books; of a green bronze lamp in their midst; of odd, long sheets of paper sprawling on a desk behind him; of a silky, striped blanket over his knees; a piano in the corner; dust on the floor. Then she looked again at the man himself. His expression was now a compound of annoyance and amusement. But something in his eyes not seen at first, startled her attention,— something

that, with the lines about them and about his mouth, shot a pang of pity through her, setting movement free.

Meanwhile, "If you're sure you *have n't* made a mistake," he was saying,— and his manner was not reassuring —"may I ask . . .?"

But she walked towards him without answer. It seemed the part of simple friendliness to kiss him as she used to; but she could not, because there was still no recognition in his eyes.

And the intrusion of unknown ladies was evidently not to the taste of his present mood. As she stood beside him wordless, a flush of new annoyance spread over his face. "Well?" he demanded with candid ferocity.

"Ah," she said very softly, "don't you know, then? I'm Zandrie of the Convent."

"Zandrie of the . . ." She hugged herself, for the fun was beginning at last! He dropped his newspaper to the floor, and held out his hand. "Sister Bobolink! . . . I don't believe it!"

She laughed for delight. "Then you *had n't* forgotten!"

"I'd be right ungrateful if I had."

"And — and you're really a little glad to see me?"

"More than that," he answered so graciously that she said then she would tell him why she had come. Yet there she faltered again because of that sense

of his being a stranger. It seemed not so easy to say it after all — the simple reason. Stranger or not, though, he had to sit here all day long — imprisonment verily worse than hers had been! So pity again got the upper hand and sent her on. "I 've come," she said, "because perhaps you 're lonely, when your aunt 's away sometimes, you know — and — do you remember how I opened your letters for you? — and I thought perhaps I could do little things for you still. And besides, I always wanted to come so — and I 'll stay as long as you like. There! I thought I 'd surprise you!"

She had surely succeeded in that!

"But of course," she faltered, "if you don't want me — if it 's not convenient —"

"Oh," he said, "I appreciate — it 's very kind — but I don't quite understand, you see. Where have you come from, and how —"

"From the convent." But this plain statement seemed to throw little light into the abyss of his bewilderment, so, "Surely you never expected me to stay! O saints! — I don't pin much faith to them, you know — *Me a nun!*"

"You don't mean —"

"Indeed I do! It 's very simple, too. It was yourself sowed the seeds of iniquity — don't you remember? in your talk with Sister Angela? So last night I packed up my things and away I — But

mercy! where *are* my things!" she added in a burst of new dismay at the realization that she had left her bundle, she knew not where.

"You ran away?" he repeated, "from the Priory — last night?"

"And spent part of the night in a railroad station. Ah such fun! I felt like a wild animal back in its home!"

But the man in the chair evidently lacked imagination. "Why the deuce at home — in a railroad station?"

"What better place?" she asked gleefully. "I 'm glad enough the train I started on stopped so soon, so I had to wait there. And a very homely but kind young man offered to show me the way to a hotel, but I had n't any money and the station was so gloriously noisy, I could n't leave it anyhow. I love those busy engines!"

"The saints took charge in spite of you, I see," said Mr. Strange Man. "What next?"

"Then I came to you."

"You came on purpose to —"

"To see you. You 're almost the only person I like in the world." For her, of course, the world meant everything outside of the convent walls. But his expression stirred uneasiness, and "I 'm afraid you are n't very glad," she added.

"Indeed I 'm delighted. How did you find the way?"

But no! His tone hurt her so that she turned away almost in silly tears, and refused to answer. In the end, however, he persuaded her to tell him some of the details of her adventure.

"I did n't know till I tried," she said, "that traveling takes more money than one 's fare, so I 'd have starved, you see, but for the lady from Washington who gave me some sandwiches; and then she piloted me across New York, and would n't let me borrow the car fare, even. And I never told her I was running away from a convent either, which seems dreadful of me; but I just did n't think I 'd better. But I told Mr. Fink. He seemed different, somehow, though I did n't like him at all at first; but afterwards he was lovely and tried to make me take five dollars, but I would n't take more than one, which I 'm to send him by mail. He got off at New Haven to go to college. It 's disgraceful, I suppose, to owe as much money as I do."

"Frightful," said Julian. "Your guardian will give you a little talk."

"But that 's why I had to borrow! — because Uncle Jason 's dead, poor soul, and did n't leave me any allowance."

"Oh!"

"And Sister Angela 's dead too."

Then who was her guardian now? he asked; and when she answered gravely that, praise Heaven, she had no such thing any more,— then he began to exam-

ine the pipe in his hands with extraordinary earnestness. "You 'll have to go back to-morrow, of course," he said at last.

She could not credit her ears. "Julian! Why, Julian! You don't mean it!"

At his name, he looked up quickly, and the blue of his eyes was as unchanged as his voice. "I do mean it," he said in a tone that savored of authority. "You 'll have to go back."

Could this be Julian? Seriously, could it? In spite of the same eyes, same voice, how incredibly he himself was changed! Were all men so untrustworthy? Was it true after all, as she had once believed, that he had not really wanted her ever? Was it possible, actually, that he neither needed nor wanted her now? The grievous doubt was knocking for admittance, when there broke in past it a tingling sense of freedom that pulled her to her feet. He should not send her back to the convent, at least! Never that!

"Come back!" the man in the chair commanded.

She halted at the door.

"Come back! Don't be childish!"

That ended her hesitation, of course, and she shut the door behind her and stumbled, blinded by tears, along the hall.

So this was the end of the quest! This was the real Julian — unsympathetic, hostile, and a tyrant. Stay with him? Go back to him? She would as

soon go back to the convent. But at the end of the hall she wheeled about and "Oh, I am a child!" she sobbed. "Where shall I go?"

Where indeed? At this moment, railroad stations held little allurement. She had not known till now how tired she was, how sick with weariness, every inch of her. The past twenty-four hours were become a nightmare; of the future her brain refused to take account. As she stood there, leaning against the casing of an open door, and trembling from the shock of the blow that had shattered her dream, her name called authoritatively reached her ears. But he could not get at her, poor soul — that is, abominable tyrant! — so she might still stand there a minute and try to think.

The room at the door of which she had halted, might or might not be inhabited, for all that one could make of it at first glance; at least there was no one in there now; it was a haven, therefore, where one could rest a minute and collect one's wits. So she shut herself in, and promptly began to cry more bitterly than ever before — which, as we all know, is saying much.

There were confused sounds in the hall outside: foot-steps, the voice of the woman who had let her in, and Julian's. What! was he instituting a search for her already? She jumped up and darted under the bed; and it was not till after the sounds had wholly subsided that she dared crawl out. She must

slip out of the house itself presently, of course, but perhaps she could afford a few seconds more of rest, first. Perhaps this was the woman's room, and she would not mind if an aching little body laid herself on the bed for a very few minutes.

Oh, what was it! She woke with a start, to see against a glimmer of light the silhouette of some creature, mustachioed, gigantic, at whom she could only stare stupid with wonder, till the present was coupled to the past and she knew that this was a man — perhaps a policeman! — lighting the gas, instigated by Julian to capture her and drag her back to the convent. A second more, and he would have her. Little fool, not to have left the house!

After lighting the gas, however, he did not at once turn round. He was in no hurry, at least. In fact, he began to read a newspaper there where he stood, without so much as a glance about the room. He read so long and showed so little eagerness of the chase, that the situation was becoming awkward at last. He was perhaps the lawful occupant of the room! She sat up.

"Hully Gee!" The man dropped his paper and stared with bulging eyes.

"So you were n't after me?" she ventured; to which another "Hully Gee!" was the gasping and only response.

"If you were n't, you need n't be frightened," she said, getting off the bed. "I 'm so glad you were n't,"

she added by way of precaution, "for I'm afraid I'd have made you so uncomfortable."

"I guess you must be the girl Mr. Furness was so fierce to find, aint you?" In spite of this alarming question, he seemed a kindly sort of creature.

"Why did he want to find me?" Her hand was approaching the door knob.

"I don't jest know that myself, do you? He says you come and gone again and he's got to have you back. Seemed kind of curious, did n't it? but I ain't much given over to bein' inquisitive when he's in that quiet sort of temper; it's kind of futile. So I jest done what he says — squinted round a corner or two, mistrustin' it was a wild goose hunt. Detective business ought to begin at home, had n't it!" and he emitted a bellow of mirth.

She could but laugh with him. "But hush!" and she lowered her own voice. "We must take care! — especially if he's in a temper."

"Oh, he won't hurt you," the kindly soul reassured her. "He aint much given to violence, these days. Leastways, it's some time since he's hove projectiles at me."

Even the revelation of a habit of heaving projectiles could not disturb her now, being what one would expect of a person who ordered one back to a convent. "You evidently know him," she said sadly. "Is he always disagreeable?"

"Him? Mr. Furness? Guess you and him aint very well acquainted, are you?"

"Not any more. Are you sure that you are?"

"I 'd ought to be; I 've hauled him these six years."

For some reason, the Knight on horseback flashed into her memory, a picture by which this word "hauled" set up another in ignominious contrast. The joyous Knight and the man in the chair were irreconcilable. She pondered. "At least he has n't pain any more?"

"Pain? Well, 't aint what it used to be, that first year or so, is it? 'T aint near so rampageous, but —"

"But what?"

"Well, he don't say much on the subject, but he kind of indicates the sofy now and then, and I know what 's up."

"Merciful saints!" and she passed her hand across her eyes, "I thought he was only a prisoner like me."

"Had n't you best go in there?" her new friend suggested. "He was fierce to get you."

"Yes, and I know why; and I 'm not going back — I think. Where 's his aunt?"

"Passed away these two years or more."

"And he 's here all alone then! Tied down to pain, alone!"

"Jule 's used to it more or less, I guess. Anyhow, he 's got sand enough for two, as I make the cal'lation; keeps busy one way and another — works, you know,

readin' proof for the concern next door; and what gets my ticket is that he don't have to work for a living neither. Gives his wages to a hospital concern or something."

"Works! Yes, of course he 'd do that. Tell me more!"

But at that he rubbed his chin in horrible dismay. "Had n't you best go —"

"No!" she interrupted with a little stamp; and by dint of some hauling herself, she managed to extract the following items: that besides proof, Mr. Furness read many books and also music — without recourse to any instrument too, which seemed odd; that the piano in his room was played chiefly by his friend the organist of the Catholic church; that sometimes of an evening, when Julian was feeling "smart," her informant hauled him out for a stroll, or to a concert when there was anything doing in that line, which there chiefly was n't. No, he ought n't to live here, the man agreed; it was n't elegant quarters; but he was set on working and this particular job took his fancy; he was full of queer ideas but had a pile of sense besides. She learned furthermore that Mrs. Wyndam had fixed his rooms up once, but that they had sort of slumped since, and neither Hercules nor his employer knew what to do about it, much to their regret.

"I believe you like him!" Zandrie exclaimed.

At this charge, he draped one leg over the foot-

board of the bed and flicked a bit of mud from his boot. "Well, I guess I did kind of like the cut of his jib from the start. But he was awful dubious about me. I used to handle baggage, don't you see? and he mistrusted I might n't handle him neat enough. Gee! but I thought he 'd bust himself laughin' when I give him the baggage master's recommend. I guess that got my vote. There was another chap applied — looked more fashionable than me, and got the job first; but he 'd have spoiled Jule's chance for a front seat in Heaven in a week, though I guess the Lord would have seen how things had went, and made excuse, would n't he? I 'd excuse Jule if he cussed his own mother. And he 's kept pretty silent, considering — leastways lately."

Zandrie drew a long breath. "Poor soul! If I thought he would n't try —" But what she had in mind to say, can only be guessed, for she was interrupted by an electric bell.

"That 's him," the man said, "I guess I 'll have to go."

"No, you won't," said Zandrie, "for I 'm going myself!"

The green bronze lamp was lighted now, but the book on Julian's knees was unopened and his hands were clasped behind his head. At her entrance, "Thank the saints!" he said, and his smile, though a little wicked, bespoke true gratitude to something.

She leaned over him, both hands on an arm of his

chair. "You won't send me back to the convent?"

"Not to-night."

"If you'd promise not to speak of such things again, I'd call you what I used to. Remember?"

"I remember something you used to *do*." He was quite delightful of a sudden!

"Kiss you? Of course. *If you're good!* Oh, but not till then!" and she skipped out of reach. "But I'll never leave you again unless you try to send me back; and then I'll run away again, only farther. But if you don't, see! I'll stand as stupid and submissive as Sister Gertrude."

This seemed to amuse him. He asked where she had been hiding; and she said, "In the room of your friend who talks through his nose about you."

"Carter's room!"

"His name is Carter? Well, I just got under Carter's bed when I thought you'd sent after me; and then I got on it and slept like a baby, and woke to find Carter glaring as though he saw the Devil. And then we got to talking about you. And now you'll have to decide where to stow me, for I'm back to stay."

She drew up a stool — it was a crooked-legged affair that took her fancy mightily — and while he attacked the problem of her bestowal, frowning as though he found it knotty, she set herself to study his face, to find whether it confirmed what the man who knew him — and liked him! — had told her.

Dear heaven! what had become of that face that she thought her memory had kept so well, of the boy whom she must still call the "real" Julian? Where had its sparkle gone, and its vivid youth? This was another, quite — this sombre tale of struggle written in lines of irritability and the will to endure. Would it ever come to mean a Julian equally real, equally potent to stir the imagination? Never, surely! For the prince of a palace of dreams, as every one knows, is beautiful always with the joy of living, untouched by its passion or pain. Poor man in the chair! It was pity, of course, that had sent her back and would keep her loyally near him, she told herself. In fact, she had to repeat it as though for her own conviction, and in defiance of a sense of the futility of pity, that was growing while she looked. For behind the eyes and mouth of this unknown Julian stood a wholesome energy of will that somehow turned pity away discomfited, apologetic. Pity? where none was asked and the record of struggle, however, grim, was signed with pride of tested strength, the sight of which must put one on one's mettle! She locked her fingers tighter about her knees. It was disconcerting, this rout of pity. But if she grudged the homage she had to yield in its place, it was because of the memory of the spell that the other Julian had wrought upon her, bending her will to his. But he would never rule her so again; he would soon know that her own will had found itself and was ready.

But what was he doing now — eyeing her with such uncalled for, ill concealed amusement! Had she any plans, he asked — besides staying?

"Hundreds!" Must she always be telling him she was not a child? "I 'm going to find my field of work, near you somewhere, and work very hard. Meanwhile I 'll stay right here."

"You 'll have to to-night, I reckon. Mrs. Bright must fix it somehow. I 'll send for her."

"The black-robed woman that let me in? Then we won't send for her. She 'd put out your lamp at a glance. Do you sleep there?"— pointing to a couch.

"In the next room," he said.

"Then I 'll sleep on that — it looks comfortable enough — and you need n't say a word to Sister Shabby-Hair."

"That would hardly do," he said gravely; and when she demanded the reason why, the only one that he gave was that he would rather not have her.

"How inhospitable!"

"Great Cæsar!" He reached for the button of an electric bell wire lying on the table. "Wait, though. You 'd better get Mrs. Bright yourself. And would you mind staying down stairs till she comes back for you?"

Zandrie pouted, but rose from the crooked-legged stool.

"Thank you," he said. "Good night."

"Good night? But I 'm coming back!"

He was very sorry, he explained, but he would have to ask her to wait till morning; it was after eight and he was going to be busy through the rest of the evening.

Yes, he had grown very harsh and unkind, and she walked to the door trembling under the hurt of this new unfriendliness.

"Zandrie!" The tone made the name an appeal. "You don't quite understand," he said, "I don't blame you!" When she reached his side, he took her hand with his old time gentleness. "If I really seemed inhospitable, it 's because you know so little about the world, it scares me — good Lord! it scares me into wishing for once that I were a woman!"

She smiled at the irrelevance of the wish. He would not be rude to her for the world, he went on; and "I suppose I do know very little," she murmured, "but oh! I want to know and live!"

"I reckon you will, Sister Bobolink."

"Ah! I begin to like you again!" and she caught up his hand to her lips. "When you call me *that* — I thought you had surely forgotten. Must I really go for Mrs. Mournful? Good night, then," and she bestowed a little pat on his shoulder in token of forgiveness and good will.

Down stairs, knitting beside a lamp whose green globe shade swallowed most of its light, sat Mrs. Bright — O irony of names! At Zandrie's message, she raised her eyebrows and went creaking up to

Julian's room, where she stayed a long time. Then she creaked back again, past the sitting room and down another flight of stairs. The rattling of dishes reminded Zandrie that she was desperately hungry; yet when she sat at last in the basement dining room, at a table covered with blue denim and furnished with bread, cold mutton, and a cup of tea, her spirit was little cheered. The cup was big enough to drown almost any sorrow, but failed to invite her present woes to suicide; and not the least of these was the preposterous silence of Mrs. Bright. That lady sat in the shadow of the sideboard — a horrific monster of black walnut — and to Zandrie's all but tearful entreaty to say something, made the Delphic reply that a promise was a promise, and uttered never another syllable. Julian explained several days later, that, as delicately as he knew how, he had hinted to his landlady that her guest was too weary that night for conversation. For the present, the mystery annihilated a large part of her appetite. "Can I go to bed somewhere, now?" she asked disconsolately; whereupon her hostess led her, still in silence, up three flights of stairs to a door that she opened with a sign to Zandrie to go in. Alone in the room, she threw herself on the bed. She had left her bundle of clothes doubtless in the too interesting station; but they were no great loss; it was good to have so immediate an excuse for the pink dress. Yet even a vision of rosy ruffles could not keep out the sense of unfulfillment — the sneaking lit-

tle loneliness — yes, actually a home-sickness for her room under the retreat-house roof. Here on the threshold of her new life, such feelings were not to be tolerated, and she knelt to say her rosary as fast as she could; but the Virgin seemed a far-away divinity; thought of her Knight himself brought small comfort; and so her first day in the world ended with tears.

CHAPTER XI

MORNING

The sun shone into her eyes, waking her as one of the town clocks struck five. A breeze stole in, cold and crystal pure as dew, trembling with the notes of the bell, glorified with spring; and under its caress unreasoning gladness spread through her. In the fairyland of the east, glimpsed between the shoulders of two hills, she saw islands of flaming cloud afloat on a pale gold sea. Smoke from the valley chimneys went up transmuted to gold dust. Trees, filmy and shimmering with the gold-green of buds, spread a network of violet shadows over the dew. From the roof of a wing of the printing house, a robin scolded a cat; then swooped to the willow tree in the yard below — but for its willow and budding cherry, an ugly patch of yard, squeezed between the printing house and a brick store, and stared at blankly by the windows of an untenanted house at the back. Yet Zandrie, seeing it and the roofs beyond, and farther yet, the hills, stretched out her arms and laughed, whispering, "I love you!" The little breeze must have wrought a spell.

Tingling deliciously with the sense of freedom, she stole down stairs without her hat, out and away towards the eastern hills. It was a long walk past shops and factories, across a bridge over a swirling, muddy stream, and past more shops and a row of dilapidated dwellings; but she trudged valiantly on to the outskirts of scattered farms, and at last to open fields and the foot of a hill. But after the climb, weariness fell from her and she lay on a floor of pungent needles, holding her breath, hands clasped, listening to the wind that rustled defiant masses of spruce and pine, under whose shower of piercing fragrance her heart beat faster; for the woods behind the convent, bountiful, gracious, and well loved, yet lacked the evergreens' challenging hardihood. When a branch flung its load of dew drops into her eyes, she shouted for delight. Once and again she threw herself on the ground to lay her cheek against small sprouting things. Then when she had caught a low sweeping limb of spruce and scrambled up, a brown, speckle-breasted bird cocked his eye at her, his body swaying to a madness of liquid music that bubbled in his throat, and "You beautiful!" she whispered; but when a jealous red squirrel jerked his tail, kicking his hind feet till they were a blur, and broke in on the solo with a series of squeaks that swelled to a blasphemous frenzy of hiccoughs and snarls, she all but fell from her branch for laughter. And it was then, when she was swinging with her bough, laughing in pure joy of living and her

heart singing "Free! Free! Free!"— it was then that the first full realization of Julian's lot sprang upon her, bursting upon the revel, to steal the wine.

Slowly she climbed down, impatient when her dress caught on a twig, and very slowly walked westward, turning to look with hungry eyes at the woods she was leaving; but the screen of sun-lit pines could no longer shut out the vision of Julian's face; the bitterness clung; the spell was broken. She shook her head, vexed; "He has spoiled it. I will go back to him; but love him again? Never!"— which she suspected even then to be a mistake.

Swinging on the gate of a red farm-house, was a very small person with a thick slice of bread. It would be hard to say to which Zandrie's heart yearned the more at the moment — the slice or the boy — and she asked him whether he thought she could have some bread too. For answer, he held out his own.

"Not for the world, dearie!" she protested; so he scrambled down from the gate and ran to a woman who had appeared in the door-way, smiling with vast good nature. "She would n't take my bread," the little boy cried, breathless.

"What for should she, sonnie? She 's had her breakfast."

"But I have n't!" said Zandrie. The friendly face, leagued with a memory of last night's meal, emboldened her.

The hint sufficed; she was heartily invited into the

kitchen, where she sighed "Ah! this is better than Mrs. Bright's."

"You 're staying to Mrs. Bright's next the printing house?"

"A dreary place," said Zandrie.

The farmer's wife was so very much interested that in five minutes Zandrie had told her about the convent and her exit, though not of what had brought her so far, for the habit of silence concerning her dream life held as though Julian were still of it.

"My gracious! hain't you no folks at all? No friends?"

"Ye-es — some friends. One, that is. And I suppose I ought to be going back to him, too, but I *am* so hungry!"

"Him!" The exclamation included surprise and misgiving; the accent puzzled her; but so did many things in the world already.

"Well! Well! Have some more pie. No folks at all! I never did! — Charlie boy, go fetch Flotilla — Well, well, well, well! You 've got as honest eyes — Why, but you ain't no more 'n a child to be loose in the world! If you would n't mind me asking — Mercy sakes! there 's the baby crying again. Flotilla, be mannerly to the young lady till mama comes back."

Flotilla was a preternaturally solemn little girl. After shoving the milk pitcher towards the guest, she sat down on a distant chair. Her brother leaned against her, standing on one foot and holding the

other; and both youngsters eyed Zandrie in silence till "Turkeys takes longer to hatch than chickens," Flotilla volunteered, in a high, tiny voice.

Charlie giggled. "Don't," said his sister. "It ain't proper." Zandrie was still too hungry to contradict. But when "Mama" entered with the baby, she flew to meet them.

"O, the size of him! I have n't touched one for years and years! O, darling, come to me!"

"He 's cranky this morning."

"He 'll come," Zandrie whispered. And he did.

"My land!" the mother commented softly. "He 's the prettiest I 've had, and they 've been seven, though these three 's all I 've raised — and Billy that works down to the printing house. There! you 'd better let me take him, and set down again."

But at that moment the baby was smiling and his hand wandering along Zandrie's cheek; and she did not hear.

Charlie mounted a chair to implant an explosive smack on her nearer hand. Then Flotilla came with something in a basket.

"Bless its heart!" said Zandrie, "Is it a feather duster?"

"No, ma'am; a little turkey."

"Oh! Did it come out of a magic bean, for instance?"

Flotilla's eyes opened wide, but she was tactfully grave; "No, ma'am; a egg."

Charle, however, roared in frank mirth.

When a clock on the wall struck nine with rude distinctness, Zandrie sighed. Julian might already have sent Carter on another wild goose chase! So she must kiss the baby once more — no, ten times more — and go. "You 've been kinder to me than any one else in the world," she said to her hostess. "Kiss me good-by."

"Kiss me!" piped Flotilla, blushing. But Charlie took what he wanted without formality. They all followed her to the gate.

"It 's a pretty big world to be alone in," the woman said, surveying the town with unflattering eyes. Zandrie agreed joyously. "I hope your friend —" Her hostess hesitated. "I hope you 're sure he 's your friend."

"O, yes! He *means* to be kind, at least."

"Well! You 're so young to be without any folks — maybe you would n't mind me asking who —"

"Mr. Julian Furness," said Zandrie.

"Him! Billy's Mr. Furness next the printing house? to Mrs. Bright's? Well, I declare! I guess he 's all right. Of course I don't know nothing much about him, only Billy likes him. He gave Billy some skates last Christmas — poor soul! Well, I don't know nothing against him, but just the same I — I hope you 'll be careful of yourself — he can't look out for you much, you know — and come here again real soon."

Zandrie laughed, kissed the baby for the fiftieth time, and promised.

Mrs. Bright received her explanation of absence with sorrowful head-shaking; Julian with high displeasure. "You had n't ought to went so far," said the landlady. "You must not," said Julian — after dismissing Carter, whose smile of greeting had been very cordial. "You know nothing about the world," he went on, "and till you do, you are not to run off at crack of dawn, without your hat."

"Why not? Why not?" she demanded petulantly, for she was leg-weary and still hungry. "Who appointed you my keeper?"

"Yourself," was the exasperating answer.

She skipped towards the door; and then, at sight of the flash of anger in his eyes, she laughed — half nervously, but he misunderstood. "Go on," he said, so low that she hardly caught the words. "It 's true; I can't prevent you."

That was somewhat childish of him, of course, but she smiled penitence for her own childishness.

"I find the world very good, really," she said, sitting down on the gnomish stool that she loved.

"You know nothing about it." Then, begging her pardon, he took up a sheet of proof.

Zandrie was for curling up on the couch where she had invited herself to spend the night, but the sight of dust on a book-case diverted her. She looked about her. "Saints alive! is the room never swept?"

"Very often, confound it! But it does n't seem to alter the surface of things much."

Her first point of attack was the mantel shelf, where old letters, burnt matches, an ash tray, and two Japanese vases kept cloister under a gray veil. She had borrowed a dust cloth of Mrs. Bright, whose eyebrows had gone up in bitter surprise at the request; and at the end of fifteen minutes the room was — to Zandrie's eyes — improved. When Julian glanced up uneasily, she only laughed, sorted, and dusted the more zealously. But the last time that their eyes met, the irrelevant fact that his face had beauty still, startled her to vivid consciousness, like a little electric shock, and she turned away confusedly, passing her dust cloth over a book that she had dusted already. She opened it aimlessly, but the word "prison" soon caught her interest. It was a story about a Frenchman named Valjean and his escape from pursuers, more exciting by far than the life of any saint or than any of the novels in the library of Our Lady's. Her heart beat fast in sympathy with the man and a child, Cosette, whom she was with at last, soul and body, forgetful of her re-discovery of Julian's beauty, even after his voice had called her out from the book. She held it before him, her excitement pouring itself out in a torrent of questions. "I never read a novel like this!" she ended, breathless.

"Most probably not!"

"It must be true! The nuns said all good novels were true in a way — though I never read one before that really sounded true."

He admitted that this was very true.

"Then I can learn!" she cried, snatching it from his hands. "Translated from the French! The Bible 's translated because it 's so great. Is it read much in the world?" But she did not wait for an answer. At the end of the fifth page, however, she looked up at him. He had not said a word, but "Why did you call me out again?" she asked.

"Don't read it now," he said. "If you try to take life in such doses, something will happen, I 'm afraid."

"That will always be slipping into what you say about me — 'afraid' — though for yourself you 're brave enough. But it 's good to know, and I must catch up with my life, you see. If one were afraid at the outset —" She fell to her reading again.

But "That particular book will only bewilder you now," he persisted. "Trust me for once."

"While you try to make a coward of me — never!"

He held out his hand.

"What right have you —" she flashed out; but his eyes compelled her. For the moment, however much she might resent it, the will in them held her, and, hardly conscious of what she was doing, she started to give him the book. What with weariness of body and

bewilderment at unreasonable opposition, all spirit of resistance seemed oozing out of her; but when his hand closed on the volume, her native wilfulness nudged her pride.

"Zandrie!" It was a command no less for that his voice was quiet. "I 've lived longer than you, not in the world exactly, these last years; but a woman in my place would know more of it than you do. Will you trust me?"

"I hate you!" was the answer.

It surprised herself; no less by its being a complete lie than by its unexpectedness. The blood rose in her cheeks and she bowed her head. After a pause, "I did n't mean it," she said. "You know I — love you."

As the pause endured, she thought the apology must have failed; yet when she ventured to look, there was nothing but laughter in his eyes. She would have preferred to find him offended! "I do," she said. "Why do you laugh?"

"It 's so long since I 've been told so!"

"I 'll never tell you so again."

"O, yes you will! But I advise you not to tell many others how you love them."

"Indeed I shall. Besides, the nuns said we ought not only to love each other, but to prove it in word and act — which is one of the few things I liked about them."

His expression was disconcerting.

"Is n't that the way in the world, then?" she asked, quite in earnest.

"It is n't exactly customary, you know, to —"

"Not customary to love!"

"To say so," he corrected.

She pondered this astounding statement. First she made sure that he meant it; then "Stop looking at me as though I were a little goblin," she commanded, "and explain everything! Don't you understand that I must know everything about the world, at once?"

"You 're a right terrifying thing to drop into a man's life," he said to that.

She stamped her foot. "Why is n't it customary to say it when one loves?"

He stiffened as against an onslaught. "I only said — I meant, it was n't customary — well, for you to tell me, for instance."

She almost laughed.

"Because —" he went on, "Well, I reckon just because you 're a woman and I, a man."

Life was at best a tangled affair; she had known that even in convent days. She had known that beyond the walls lay knottier problems still — some perhaps so hard that the patience and courage of a life time might scarcely untie them. But here was a knot too absurdly small for talk of courage, yet big enough to vex. Had it been a question of expressing hatred — "It 's silly!" she cried. "You must tell me in earnest — what you meant by saying —"

"O pshaw!"

"Well? You 're a man and I, a woman. What of that?"

But he only sat silent.

Some mystery was gathering about her like a mist. "You won't explain?"

But he still sat silent.

"You ought to explain if you can." Then "Speak to me!" she cried plaintively.

And at that, he spoke, addressing himself to the mantel-piece. "I 'm a damned fool! Oh, I beg your pardon! But questions always have that effect on me. I ought to have warned you." He took up the proof sheets that he had laid aside, and began to work diligently.

She laid her hand on his that held the pen. "I know," she said, "that men are somehow different from the rest of us; yes, and the nuns had very little to do with them, not counting priests; but I never knew why nor thought to ask till this very moment. Men — all but priests and poor McClung — were n't allowed on the grounds except under force of circumstances, such as a gas leak!"

"Or cracked vertebræ?"

"Ah! And I know that men are made stronger than women, though why, only the good God can tell. And I know that outside the convent, men and women marry, which means that they live together ever after; and of course they have to love each other a good

deal to do that — even better than I love you! Why! you once asked Sister Angela to let you take me away to live with you!"

"Because I thought you'd be happier out in the world."

"Oh! Yet you seemed to love me lots in those days — more than now, I guess."

"You think so?"

She looked up into his eyes and then laughed gleefully. He was not changed! How had she ever thought it? "But you haven't explained yet!" she exclaimed. "If men and women don't say they love each other, how do they ever agree to live together?"

"They do tell each other — under those circumstances."

"Before or after?"

He was suddenly inspired. "The man always says it first, because, as you said, he's stronger and expects to do all the work — the work, that is, that makes the money to keep his wife and himself and their house and — And so, if the woman tells the man first, you see —"

"I see!" she cried happily, for the mist was lifting indeed. "Of course it wouldn't be polite or right. How simple! O stupid Julian! why could n't you have told me sooner? Only of course —"

"Well?"

"Of course it's different with us two. I mean," she added hastily, "that we understand one another,

so that when I say 'I love you'— which I do like everything — you know just what I mean — that I 'm not asking you to take me and —"

"I understand."

"You do, don't you! And you told me about its not being customary to say those things, perhaps so I should n't make mistakes with others who might n't understand. O you 're good! Yes, and I 'll say it a thousand times — to you, but to no other man in the world. Oh, if you like me the least bit, what good friends we 'll be!" and she clasped her hands in her old-time gesture of glee.

But a minute more, and something curious had happened. First, as she studied his profile,— for he had taken up his neglected work again — first, she wondered why she had been loath to come back from the woods; then, feeling in memory the touch of the breeze, the thrill of the hill-top caught her breath; and yet again, seeing the blue veins of his temple, and a sunbeam that was creeping over his hair — thick as of old, and golden under the touch of the sun as when she had seen it first — then she found herself swept up on a blinding surge of new emotion, leaned forward, drew his head to her lips, and kissed his forehead.

He started with an exclamation and seized her wrists to pull her nearer but suddenly pushed her away instead. In his eyes there was only amused

surprise. "So I 've been *good!*" he said at last. But she had forgotten her promise of the night before. "You 're making it uncommonly hard for me to be good, you know?" But still she hardly heard, for the surge had swept her up to the stars.

When he released her hands, they fell nerveless on the wheel of his chair, while a hot flush flooded her face, not of shame, but of surprised, new ecstacy. When she raised her eyes, he was intent on his proof. "I 'm sorry," he murmured politely, "but this has to be finished by twelve."

As she rose uncertainly, something fell against her foot — the forbidden book. If the issue of that engagement had been doubtful, it was decided now; she laid "Les Miserables" on the table. But Julian was too tactful to notice — or too busy.

While she stood watching him with a curiously beating heart, the noon whistles blew. "Sorry to seem rude," he said, "but — you 'll really have to go. They 'll send for this presently. And Carter 'll have to be here helping me this afternoon, so — can you come back at five? And Zandrie — please don't go out without telling Mrs. Bright where you 're going."

"Ugh! Won't Carter do as well?"

"Heaven help us!" But his laughter, however perplexing, was good to hear.

Though the sunlight was still on his hair and the laugh in his eyes, she turned away. She walked along

the dingy corridor as through a hall of her cloud palace, bewildered, awed, but happy — oh, very happy! And when she had closed the door of her room, she leaned against it, and "O my life!" she whispered, "what has happened?"

CHAPTER XII

AFTERNOON

Dinner was interesting, on the whole. Carter, at one end of the table, furiously whetted the carving knife, and then, but for a half dozen furtive glances at Zandrie, stared down into his plate and spoke not a word. The other boarders, of whom all but an elderly lady were men, also assaulted their plates in weary silence until the entrance of a thin little woman who took a seat opposite Zandrie, and whom Mrs. Bright desired to present as Mrs. Smith. Mrs. Smith in turn desired to present her husband, who arrested a fork-load of rice, to bow and declare himself delighted. "I 'd be pleased to know," Mrs. Smith announced while waiting to be served, "— real pleased to know who has been prowling round my room this morning."

"O let up!" her husband interrupted. "I tell you the room 's been swep'."

"Mine has not," said the elderly lady.

Mrs. Bright raised her eyebrows and offered more veal to a fat gentleman at her left, who was of a pacific nature. "Don't care if I do," he responded

loyally. "Licking good veal - - better than week before last, 'pon honor. Pass up the Worcestershire, somebody! Thanks, thanks! Say, ladies and gents, just follow my lead and don't have your rooms swep' but twiced a year. That 's my plan since Mrs. T's demise, and it has n't reduced my weight a mite, neither!"

During dessert, a blushing young man upset the milk pitcher, and it was the tactful fat gentleman who relieved his embarrassment by bellowing "Where's the cat? Hi, pussy, pussy, pussy!"

No one paid any attention to Zandrie except Carter, whose eye she caught now and then, to his florid dismay, and Mrs. Smith, who smiled upon her and asked whether she was a transient; also whether she did n't relish date pie. She herself had given the recipe to Mrs. Bright, but the pie had not yet appeared on the table; the price of dates had risen lately, maybe. "That 's right," said her husband. But no one else seemed to be listening, not even Mrs. Bright, towards whom Zandrie's heart suddenly softened.

After dinner, the obliging Carter lent her a pencil and paper whereby to write a letter to Mrs. McClung. But it was odd, how her thoughts would dance away whenever she tried to pin them to the paper. At four o'clock she had written not quite half a page; at quarter past four she had torn that sheet and begun another; at half past four she discovered that Carter's pencil was dull; at twenty-five minutes before

five the second sheet went the way of the first. Yet at Our Lady's, the ease with which Zandrie wrote compositions had been so famous! At fourteen minutes of five she had no more paper, and at thirteen minutes, the pencil had rolled under the table.

As for Julian, when she opened his door at the third stoke of five, he merely looked up from his proof sheets with an extraordinarily formal bow, and asked her to sit down and excuse him for working a few minutes longer. In fact, his tone was curiously like Sister Angela's when, forcing down all signs of anger, she had sometimes bidden Zandrie the culprit to sit down.

"I don't want to sit down," she said, not defiantly as before Sister Angela, however.

At last, as she stood looking at him, mystified, wistful, yet happy at the core of her, he began to smile as though in spite of himself; and "Ah!" she cried, "you 're nice once more! It must be the work that makes you sometimes queer."

"Only the unusual effort to be good," he explained gravely.

She had crossed the room, meanwhile, to look over his shoulder at the long printed sheets on whose margins he scribbled little hieroglyphics, from which her glance soon wandered to his hair. That was better! It was darker than of old, to be sure, and there was no sunbeam now to draw out its gold, yet of a sudden she yearned with a mysterious pain to lay her

cheek against it, as she used to do. This morning she might have yielded to the impulse, but now — now her hand lay still on the rim of the chair-back as though tied there.

"Please be through," she pleaded at last. "I've something to tell you."

"At your command, madame. I'll defy the whole pack if you'll sit down."

"You're a very brave, wonderful man." She was looking at his work again.

"Who told you so?"

"Carter!" she said triumphantly. "He says you work most of the time."

"So do most men."

"Of course; I shall do it myself some day; but not such work as yours. And Carter says you don't even have to do it."

"I had to — or grow unfit for the society of ladies."

"But Carter says —"

"Confound Carter!"

"Ah, I love to hear men swear!" and she hugged herself joyously.

Julian threw back his head with a ringing laugh, and his hair brushed her fingers. She caught her breath.

"Please sit down," he said. "I'm still civilized enough to hate to keep my seat while a lady stands."

A curious feeling! But she seated herself without

questioning, and, chin on hands, studied his face once more. How had she ever been disappointed in it, for even a few minutes? It was surely the most satisfying of all the faces that she had seen, and the most beautiful!

"What have you to tell?" he asked.

"I thought you were never going to ask! That I 've decided — Guess!"

"To go back to the convent."

"Evil one!" and she drew her stool a little nearer. "That I 've decided to let you be my guardian."

But the effect of this was not what she had calculated; he merely laughed and thanked her for the honor.

"But you 're not in earnest," she faltered, "and I am."

"Upon my soul, I believe you are! Well, and I repeat my thanks; but really, you know —"

"You 're not even pleased!"

"I confess I should n't like to take the responsibility."

"But if I promised to be good?"

"That would simplify matters, of course."

"But you know I could n't keep my promise?" She regarded the proof-sheets on the floor thoughtfully. "Of course I never have been very good, except with you when I was a child, and with Sister Andrea and Sister Isidore, and sometimes with dear old Mother McClung. But I thought perhaps with you it might

still be — different. I thought it might be exciting, at least, to try it."

"But it might be safer not to?"

"Perhaps. You might come to hate me as the Pious Ladies and the Sisters did."

"What shall you say to them, by the way?" he asked.

"Nothing more than I said in my note to Mrs. McClung, that I left in the next to the biggest saucepan. I've done with them forever."

"On the contrary, they'll soon be clamoring at your door."

"Julian!" and she sprang up. "You haven't let them know!"

He had. He explained firmly, as one who looks forward to a scene of turbulence and little joy, that he had wired the Prioress last night. "I can't make you see and I'm not going to try," he added, "but you'll understand some day that I'd be a scoundrel just to have done anything else."

Zandrie's emotions were too mixed for turbulence, however. "*You* — let them know!" One could grasp the egregious deed only as a fact bared of import, shorn of intelligible motive or result. Yesterday, or even this morning perhaps, she could have charged with treachery and scorched with scorn this riddle called Julian; but now — what had happened, indeed, that now she merely wanted to understand, and to justify!

"They 'll be here right soon, I think," he went on, "doing their best to get you back."

"You!" she repeated, scarcely hearing. "Why? Why?"

"Plain case of duty. Your coming to me makes me responsible for you."

As though that astounding and questionable statement explained! But however distorted his vision, it was plain from his expression that he had acted upon a sense of duty rather than malice. "Trying to get me back," she repeated slowly. "No. No, I think they won't do that. I troubled them so. I was a discord among them — a piece of lava set in a marble wall."

"But they 'll believe it their duty to re-set you in the wall."

She pondered. "Perhaps you 're right. But have they any right — any claim on me — to force me back?"

"I don't know."

"Then — then there 's nothing for it but to — O me! to what? I 'm caught! Julian!" and the tears rushed to her eyes, "how could you! How could you!"

"You 'll be brave, I reckon," he said gravely.

"Brave? I 'd almost *go back* with them to have you think me brave. But oh! you 'll not take their part against me!" she broke out, "I 'll see them —

and fight — and be brave. But promise that — promise to fight on my side!"

"No, I won't promise," he answered slowly after a pause in which she stared at him in waxing fright.

"Do you want me to leave you, then?" she asked at last. "Ah, but you can't want that, when you 've been so lonely! And I — I 've been lonely too. O the barren, barren life! Julian! remember it! You saw it for yourself. Remember your own words to Sister Angela. Do anything but try to send me back. Dear, dear Julian! anything but that — the convent!" She had slipped to her knees and clasped her hands on the arm of his chair.

"Get up," he said gently.

But she still knelt and plead in a passion of entreaty. "Promise not to take their part against me. Be my friend as you used. Let me keep it longer — my freedom — and my happiness. Promise! Promise!"

Doubtless it was an awkward situation for Julian, and doubtless he wrestled manfully to see its ethical demands; and without any doubt whatever, the bright tears on a lady's lashes help illumine the horn marked Duty on such dilemmas. "I promise then," he said at last. The next instant, he seized her arm. "Get up — quick!"

But before the words were out, a whirlwind in the shape of a little boy burst into the room and tripped over Zandrie's feet. "Golly!" was his only comment.

Julian caught him by a sleeve. "Knock next time, Bill; and meanwhile, apologize."

"It 's 'most five: thirty," said the boy, "and they want the galley P D Q; and how was I to know there was a girl sayin' her prayers to you?"

Zandrie hastily stood up.

"Bill," said Julian, "look me in the eye."

Bill obeyed, standing on one leg.

"Now then, you 'll oblige me by not mentioning that you found a lady here saying her prayers. It 's the sort of thing one does n't publish. And apologize."

"But I was directly in his path," said Zandrie.

Bill stared at her with inscrutable eyes and a very crooked smile. "Maybe I don't mind if you were. I 'd just as leaves apologize. But I say! — give us that galley, Mr. Furness! Jemimy but it 's late!"

But he was not through with it. Carter would take it over, later.

Bill's whistle intimated that this was an unusual procedure. "They 'll want to know what 's up," was his parting shot, "but I ain't the feller to peach."

Zandrie flew after him under the impression that he was falling down stairs, and came back laughing. "He sounded like poor Father Haggarty falling into the crypt! What is the creature?"

"A little devil."

"Ah, you 're very wicked!" she said gleefully.

"The nuns did n't mention — such things?"

"Only *the* — There's a difference, you know."

Yes, he confessed to a knowledge of the distinction, and explained the official duties of Bill in the printing room. Then he questioned her about her dinner acquaintances. Right queer, were they? But no one was rude, of course?

"No — only dreadfully polite. Especially Mrs. Smith."

"Confound it!" he exclaimed, "I'm an idiot not to have thought of your having your meals alone."

"Or with you?"

"That would be jolly, but out of the question." He was unable to give an intelligible reason why it was out of the question, however. Mystery number one. Mystery number two followed on its heels, when the supper bell began its horrid din and she was for obeying it — and Julian — without pouting, for she would be back, she explained, the minute supper was over.

But that too was out of the question, he said, and because — forsooth! — a man was coming to see him.

"Goody!" she said, "I like men!"

His mouth quivered on the edge of a smile, but he spoke with unambiguous decision; "We'll have to say good night right now."

There was nothing for it but to yield with what grace one could. Half way to the door, however, a misgiving waylaid her that turned her quite sick at

heart. "You — you did n't want that little boy to speak of me," she faltered, "and now, this man who 's coming — You are n't ashamed of my friendship — of me — are you? Because I know so little of the world? and do such wrong things, you say?"

"Bless your heart, no!" And his smile was so entirely reassuring that she forgot all vexing mysteries. "The world 's good, then," were her parting words. "This has been the best day of all my life. We 're going to be happy, Julian — you and I!"

If incredulity was in his eyes, there was something in hers that prevented her seeing it. But why should there be incredulity in his? No one says that there was.

CHAPTER XIII

NIGHT

At first she had slept, but a sleep of vivid dreams in which emotions slip the noose of stolid reality and race for their lives. Just before waking, she had walked with some one through the palace of her old imagining, or some such vague, lovely, unstable halls; and wherever they strolled, a stream of light like incandescent gold, pouring through a rent in the shifty roof, slanted across the face of the one she walked with, so that at first she could not see the features. But as she looked, she grew faint, for it was Julian's, and the eyes were drawing the life from her body, so that she would have sunk in a nerveless heap but for the grasp of his hand. And even after waking she lay for a while in the clasp of the nameless rapture that wrapped her about like flame. "Julian!" she whispered; and then "O God, he was so beautiful! Give him back." And she closed her eyes to dream the dream again; but it would not come, and already the ecstacy was sinking, leaving her wide eyed and stupid. The silence began to grow into a stifling presence.

Would the day with its bird voices never come? It must be nearly morning. Ah! The bell of the town hall clock was beginning to strike; it would tell good news; and at the fourth stroke, she sighed with relief. But at the fifth, she started, and the sixth and seventh brought dismay. It was only midnight!

Her heart began to beat with a growing fear — of what, it was hard to say; of another hour of horrid silence, perhaps. No, but of the lurking mystery of things — little, tormenting gnats of mystery as baffling as the strange, riotous creature that had beaten its wings in her heart for the first time that morning, after she had kissed Julian on the forehead. It was to put down the commotion of those wings now that she rose and went to the window.

The hill from which the breeze had come at dawn, shimmered in the moonlight like a phantom. To her eyes, all the world out there in the pallor of midnight was as a part of her past dreams; its loveliness made no claim on reality. The weeping willow, bathed in moon-lit dew, hung like a spirit over the cavern of its own shadow. Trees, roofs, chimneys, and the hills beyond, all floated in a sea of wan, unreal beauty.

She sat on the floor and laid her head on the window sill where the night air might cool her cheeks. But the winged thing at her heart was not to be shaken off. What was the tumult about, then? What had happened? Dearly as she had loved her father and mother and Sister Isidore, she remembered no such

riot of blood in her body, when she had kissed them. "O my life!" she whispered, "I want him. Julian!"

The longing to get nearer to him shook her back into a sense of reality, so that the splendor of the moon-lit country was at last a vital thing. A wind had arisen, and the pale streamers of the willow swung and tossed, and all the world without was disquieted as herself. Now trees and roofs were under shadow; now a gust tore the cloud from before the moon, distilling pearly shimmer from shadow and sending multitudinous whispers into the night. A planet was swinging up over the hill top, the white liquid of its light brimming over into a tiny halo. Yes, the world was beautiful, however mysterious, and "I have begun to live at last," she told herself. "He said that I should." Once more the pain of longing shook her; it brought her to her feet; it was resistless. And why should one resist? She would dress and steal down to his door, careful to wake no one, and then she would merely listen and be grateful for any sound from within that should be the least sign of his living presence. He could find no objection, should he know; and he would not know.

The hall window gave no light because of the nearness of the store. The blackness was just a little dreadful; for she was still child enough in her dread of the dark. And how a board in the third stair had verily shrieked! But for that, her progress was satisfactorily noiseless. She felt her way past three

doors, to the room at the end of the hall, forgetting till her hand struck the door knob, that it was Julian's sitting room, and that he must be in the room she had just passed. She crept back, knelt, and laid her cheek against the door. The winged creature was making a fearful commotion now, for Julian was very near. Perhaps if she listened, she could catch the sound of his breathing.

For the first few seconds, the thumping of her heart was the only sound in her ears; then the whisper of her name flashed like a light through her brain. She held her breath, incredulous; but it came again, questioning, and "Julian!" she whispered back.

"Is there any trouble?"

"N—o—o."

"Then what—?"

"I had to come. Night is so lonely!"

Why was he awake himself? It occurred to her that he might be in pain — more than usual — and she shivered. "Can't you sleep either?" She was speaking almost aloud, forgetful now of all but his welfare. "Perhaps you 'd sleep if some one were sitting beside you."

There was no answer. Her heart beat fast. The silence grew so long at last that she thought he had not heard. "Julian!" she entreated, "Speak to me! May n't I come in?"

Still no answer nor sound, so that she whispered his name again, and in fear.

But there was no sign that he had heard, until a rustle as of an abrupt decisive movement, perhaps of an arm; and after that, "No," he said.

"But Julian —"

"Go back this instant!"

"Very well." And she meant to obey, but knelt there still. What she was waiting for — the sound of his voice again — soon came, and quite above a whisper. "Go back at once, and quietly."

But yet she did not move. "You 're not angry with me, are you?" she asked tremulously at the key-hole.

"Yes, if you don't go."

"But when —"

An exclamation interrupted her, unintelligible, but emphatic. "You *must* go!" followed it.

As she rose from her knees, a door at the other end of the hall creaked, and a head was thrust out, too fantastic in the flickering light of a candle to be recognized at first. Besides, Julian's voice, low but fiercely distinct, filled her attention. "Don't speak again. Obey me."

She sighed and turned from the door, and the candle light fell full upon her. The person holding the candle was Mrs. Smith.

Mrs. Smith's smile had seemed a little less offensive at supper, so that after it Zandrie had confided to her the comical fact of her having no night-dress, because of the bundle that she had lost; and the friendly little person had lent her one. In fact, she

had seemed almost too friendly, especially about asking questions that one would really rather not answer. But now, as her head was being silently withdrawn, Zandrie, standing with her hand on the knob of Julian's door and looking at her dreamily, suddenly noted the total absence of her smile. She feared that she had waked her. She would apologize in the morning.

Back in her room, she sat again on the floor by the window, the night breeze on her forehead, and Julian's voice echoing in her ears. Why he had been so displeased with her, who could say? It was not because she had disturbed his sleep, for he had evidently been already awake. His tones the last time that he spoke, were stern — almost harsh. But perhaps it was only because he was tired of pain.

Gradually the fever to which she had waked, sank under the touch of the coolness of the night. Some heavy drops of rain began to fall, at first in single thuds, then faster until they were a host, the sane rhythm of whose march brought her peace. She went back to bed, and a few minutes later she was asleep.

CHAPTER XIV

THE PASSING OF THE NUNS

Mrs. Bright's lamenting voice woke her at seven with the announcement that Mr. Furness desired her to deliver a note to Miss Donallon. And inasmuch as notes had played but the smallest part in Miss Donallon's life, she pounced upon the folded bit of paper that Mrs. Bright had tucked under the door, in a wonderful excitement. The handwriting was eccentric to the verge of illegibility, but "I cannot see you," she managed to decipher, "till twelve: fifteen this noon. Very sorry. If you go out, please tell Mrs. Bright. I beg you also to wear your hat; not to speak to any stranger, man or woman; not to run; and not to get lost. Don't go out of sight of houses; and keep well within the town. I would rather you did n't go out alone at all, but if you think you must, be very careful. J. M. F."

After reading this autocratic document several times, she re-folded it, patted it defiantly, kissed it humbly, bestowed it in her pocket, and went down to breakfast at last in the astounding determination to go out only in the company of Mrs. Bright.

As she had taken a long time to arrive at this decision, all the boarders had finished breakfast but Mrs. Smith, who nodded unsmilingly and bent her attention on some wicked-looking coffee. Her hair had playfully eluded the comb's advances. It was the only hint of playfulness, however, about her person, with the possible exception of the bow of her light blue dressing sacque. Mrs. Smith was plainly not at ease; nor was Zandrie at the end of five minutes. Saints alive! One would prefer the smile to this its successor of pursed lips and abnormal unconsciousness of another's presence. "Is it that I waked you?" the poor child asked. "I tried to be quiet."

Her vis-a-vis raised her eye-brows and bit a muffin; and the two acts made an insult that smote Zandrie speechless.

The woman who dealt it soon folded her napkin. It was not till she had risen to go that she met Zandrie's eyes. "Well?" she questioned, with an untranslatable toss of the head.

"I don't know what you mean."

"Oh, *don't* you?" and Mrs. Smith turned away exalting her nose in splendid incredulity; at which, Zandrie rose quivering.

"Stop!" she cried; and then, "no — you can go. You 're rude."

"Oh, *am* I!" The little woman flounced about, glaring. "I 'm rude, am I? And I can go! Thank you, ma'am; so kind, I 'm sure! Only if I was *you*, I

would n't have much to say to people as try to show themselves the least bit friendly, not knowing much of anything about you. I guess you found you 've struck the wrong place this time, did n't you? Or ain't we all the kind we thought we was, coming here? I told Smith at the time, we did n't make enough inquiries to know much of anything about it." But she did not wait to make more now.

Naturally this assault left its victim without a hearty appetite. She could discover nothing in Mrs. Smith's behavior and words but frenzied nonsense. Were many women in the world so preposterously irascible? — or mournful? And did all speak bad English? Anger, bewilderment, disgust, trooped with her upstairs and sat down with her there. The longing to run for help to Julian pulled her twice, in the face of his commands, to the top of the stairs, and twice she turned back. But suddenly the sun came out from a cloud, and the willow branches, tipped with drops from a recent shower, turned to diamond pendants. Sun-flecked hills, robins all but bursting with a song of well-being — what mortal could resist their summons? Even if Zandrie had remembered Mrs. Bright, it seems doubtful whether she would have asked her escort. She did snatch up her hat, however.

But she was destined not to run far, that morning. In fact, a desperate collision with two bodies brought her up short on the doorstep itself, where she was stopped, not only by their unyielding bulk, but by four

hands laid upon her with a will. She found herself gasping on the shoulder of Sister Gertrude. Mother Genevieve buttressed her on the left. But the convulsive grip of the two nuns was not needed to check farther flight, for Zandrie was quite limp with surprise.

"Holy Virgin! bind her fast!" Sister Gertrude panted.

"I 've got her!" said the Prioress, and thanked the saints for the achievement.

"Had we better take her in here?" Sister Gertrude asked, surveying the door-casing with distrust.

"Is there any suitable room," the Prioress asked of Zandrie, "where we can be sure of privacy for a little while?"

By this time Zandrie had mustered her forces. Julian had said that she would be brave, and she was going to justify his faith. She invited them into the parlor courteously. "You need n't hold me," she added gently, "I 'm not trying to escape. We expected you to-day!"

Sister Gertrude's eye-brows disappeared under the white linen band across her forehead, and she kept her hold until sitting down in the parlor.

Zandrie still spoke politely; "I 'm sorry you don't trust me."

"I am sorry we have so little reason to," and the Mother seated herself with a sigh, signing to the other nun to release the prisoner, however.

"You are tired, Reverend Mother," said Sister Gertrude.

"I am," she assented.

Sister Gertrude, sitting bolt upright on Mrs. Bright's haircloth sofa, looked about furtively through her very round spectacles. She was one of the few nuns who had been at St. Scholastica's for over ten years and yet held no responsible position in the community.

"I am sorry," said Zandrie, "to have caused you weariness."

"You can prove it," and the Mother's great, eager eyes challenged her.

"The Blessed Virgin never leaves us without a chance to retrieve —" But the Superior signed to Sister Gertrude to be silent.

In the pause that followed, both nuns studied the carpet earnestly. Then the Prioress began the inquisition. Zandrie's conduct, she preluded, was quite inexplicable — not to say more. They were in the dark — they who had had her in their care, a sacred trust — and an explanation was their first due. But Zandrie met the commanding eyes unflinchingly and in silence.

"Who is this Mr. Furness?"

"The best friend I have in the world." The blood rushed to her cheeks; it was difficult, for some reason, to speak of Julian to these good but uncompromising and surely uncomprehending women, who were even

now exchanging a glance that implied the fulfillment of some evil foreboding.

"The young man who was received among us years ago and given our care?"

"He has ill repaid us," said Sister Gertrude; and at that, Zandrie's well drilled battle-line broke.

"He made a gift to the convent," she flashed out. "You 've forgotten so soon? And if he thought he 'd left a tithe of his debt unpaid, he 'd give his last —"

"Quietly, my dear," the Mother admonished.

"When you 're unjust to him? I 'll never be quiet and let that be."

This brought the Mother's eyes upon her with so searching a scrutiny that no matter how much against her will, she was discomfited and bent her head.

"He is married of course?"

"No. O no!"

Another pause. And then, "Alexandra, look me in the eye and explain your being here!"

The tone of this challenge was so appalling in its mysterious implications that she almost lost hold of the simplicity of the true explanation. Instinct told her confusedly that its very simplicity would damn it; it would not convince these inquisitors. "Where else should she go?" she faltered. She had decided to leave the convent; had always wanted to; and — and he was the only friend she had in the world — almost; and she remembered that he was coming here to live;

and so she had sought until she found him. O very simple indeed!

"Your coming was a surprise to him?"

"O yes! a wonderful surprise!" and she met the Mother's eyes with a smile of gleeful reminiscence.

"The telegram implied that," the Prioress murmured. "Yes, I must believe that. But you were in communication with him before coming? You have heard from him — I don't know how it was possible, though Father Thomas said yesterday that the boy, Ambrose, once met you entering the little gate as though —"

"I have never heard from him or about him — never a word — since his aunt's — Mrs. Wyndam's letter, years ago."

The Superior questioned her, and she told all that she remembered of the letter.

It was evident that in Sister Gertrude's case, at least, curiosity was beginning to crowd out wrath. "You had other friends," she suggested,—"school friends?"

"Yes — a few."

"Then I fail wholly," said Mother Genevieve, "to understand."

Though the silence was awkward, Zandrie did not try to enlighten her.

"Who was the man who came out of the door before you — whom you were running after?" Sister Gertrude demanded.

"I don't know. I did n't see. Carter perhaps, or Mr. Smith, or the fat man who —"

"Who are Carter and Mr. Smith?"

"Two of the other men in the house."

"Merciful saints! are there no women?"

"Yes, I 'm sorry to say."

A frightful pause.

"Where is Mr. Furness?" This from the Prioress.

"Upstairs." She sprang to her feet. "Oh, go up to him and talk with him! You 'll understand better then. I 'll tell him to let you come!"

"Alexandra!" The Mother started up, for Zandrie was already at the foot of the stairs. "Come back, I command you! What is he that we should — Find a servant and send for him. It is proper that he should come to us."

Zandrie wheeled about. "You don't know then? You don't know that he is — that he sits in a chair all day? that he can't come to us? Have *you* forgotten, Sister Gertrude? You helped drag away the horse when it fell on him and lay dead from the force of its fall."

"I thought he had nearly recovered when he left us."

"You were looking to your own soul." Tears caught her voice. "I saw them carry him out." She held out her hand to the Prioress. "Come with me. When you see him, you 'll understand perhaps — why I came."

"You mean he is a cripple?"

She shivered a little, for that word, meaning to her something so forlorn, so pitiable, so different from all that meant Julian, had never been admitted to her inmost thought of him. "I did n't come to give pity," she said. She had forgotten so soon, then! "Come — and see."

There was another long pause; then, "Dear child," the Mother pleaded, drawing her towards her, "come with us. We are your friends too — better perhaps than the friend you think you have upstairs. Because we were your friends, you see, we came here — a long night's journey. You must see that. I think you must understand that, and come without — Come quietly, without resistance, and we 'll all forget *this*, and —"

"You mean —" Zandrie pulled her hand away and stood braced for the contest that she had thought was not to come after all. "You mean you 're going to try to get me back?"

The other straightened too. "To get you back? But that went without saying. You are coming back with us to-morrow. Come willingly, without ado, and we shall not have to compel —"

"Compel! Never! Ah! but I thought you almost understood at last — were almost kind." She leaned against the door, her hands clasped against her throat.

The Superior reasoned patiently. "We are respon-

sible for you, body and soul," she ended. "The Blessed Virgin will bear us witness that we've tried to do our duty, and our duty now is to take you back — at least till you are older."

There was a quiet authority in the tones that for a second all but dismayed Zandrie. "Oh, is there a woman in the world that will understand?" she cried; and then, "Yes — he said you would know it for your duty. But oh! you were mistaken! And I will not go back. Where I starved? And I came away and found the free air and the dear life in the world! I'm free! free! God bear me witness, I was unhappy always — always! I hated your ways. I hated the life that was no life at all. While you sang your offices, I thought of high God and his blessed Mother. My brain thought and thought. It was n't afraid. And this I know — take my body to shut away by force, if you can — but for my soul, it's mine, not yours, to lose or keep. Wait!" She put out her hand. "Stand where you are! I dare to call on God himself and vow to him — to God himself and the dear Virgin too — I vow before you both, that if you force me back, I will kill myself."

The Mother's hand shot out. "Stop! I forbid —"

"Too late! I've made my vow; and you know I'll keep it."

"O Mother of Heaven! what to do with her!" exclaimed Sister Gertrude.

She had risen in her dismay, clutching the crucifix of her rosary.

Zandrie's words, spoken on an impulse that was very sudden even for her, startled herself, yet did not frighten as much as the danger that had seemed to drive her upon them.

"She is wicked," said Sister Gertrude. "She was a strange, unruly child."

Zandrie turned on her. "You believe me. You 've been in the convent longer than Mother Genevieve; you know I keep my word. Look at me, Reverend Mother, and believe me too."

The Prioress looked at her, dismayed not at all. "Foolish child! Yes, and wicked, as Sister Gertrude said."

"I 've made my vow."

"A foolish vow. No vow at all."

"I spoke it to God himself!"

"Holy Mother!" Sister Gertrude crossed herself. "The Devil is speaking through her. She blasphemes!"

"To kill oneself is a crime," said the Mother. "There is no salvation for those — You think you would chose eternal Hell sooner than —"

"It would be your own crime, if you forced me to it. For eternal Hell — send me there! God will understand. But you won't try to force me." She spoke as with conviction, not pleading.

Mother Genevieve flushed, and after a pause turned to Sister Gertrude. "It is the Evil One himself that tempts me to leave her here."

The Sister nodded and blinked. "She was always lawless, always without reverence for any holy thing. She refused confirmation. Her soul is past reclaiming."

After the high-water mark of her effort had been reached and she had caught a glimpse, as she thought, of victory's sail above her horizon, Zandrie's bodily strength had begun to ooze away so that she must lean against the door to keep from trembling; but she drew herself up once more. "Who are you to look to my soul? That 's between God and me, I told you. I 'm not a Catholic! I refused confirmation because I promised my father not to be a Catholic ever; and I keep my promises. Why should you want me back where I troubled you always? Let me alone, and I 'll never trouble you again. Leave me, and I — could almost love you. Oh, it 's all so simple!" Her voice broke. She looked from one to the other, pleading at last.

Sister Gertrude began to murmur her beads.

"Are you planning to marry this man?" the Prioress asked.

"No!" said Zandrie, startled. "At least — no, I don't think so."

"He has n't asked you to?"

"No — I don't think so."

The eyes of both women were upon her, incredulous, astonished.

"You don't wish to stay, then, in order to be with him — near him?"

The answer came hard; "Yes."

"No delicacy even! No sense of propriety!" Sister Gertrude burst out.

"When he does n't want you!" the Mother exclaimed.

"He does want me. He 's lonely — alone with pain. He was glad that I came." Her voice fell.

"We will see him," the Prioress said at last.

A few seconds later, Zandrie was at his door, bursting in before his permission was half out. Carter was with him, but never mind that! "They 're down stairs!" she cried, "— the nuns! And I think I 've won; but they want to talk with you. And I 've solemnly vowed to kill myself if they take me back!"

Carter was summarily dismissed. Then, "That was naughty," said Julian.

"Yes indeed! but I meant it, and I always keep my vows." She spoke ruefully, for the suggestion of even remote death was unpleasant now that Julian's smile was upon her. "But they won't force me back," she added, brightening. "Remember your promise."

He stared out of the window for a full minute before speaking. "I remember. And I 've thought of a possible way — just possible; but don't get your

hopes up too high. I 'll talk with them anyhow. 'And in that day seven women shall lay hold of one man.' Has the whole sisterhood turned out?"

Sister Gertrude, as she passed the hall mirror to go up stairs in her Superior's wake, looked into it and adjusted her veil.

As for Zandrie, the half hour that followed was one of exceeding unrest, for he had ordered her to wait down stairs until summoned. Inarticulate scraps of the interview above floated within reach of her ears: there seemed to be many and long pauses. Once a tidal-wave of impatience bore her out to the door-step, where the sun beat on her head already too hot; and then the whistles screamed the news that it was noon, and she fled back to Mrs. Bright's dark parlor. Julian, if he took her part with a will, would probably win the nuns' consent to his plan, whatever that might be; yet when Sister Gertrude summoned her, she mounted the stairs with a fast beating heart, at each step calling upon defiance.

The nuns sat side by side on his couch. He himself leaned back in his chair, his arms folded and head thrown back; but he looked at the mantelpiece only and little comfort could she read in the lines of his profile. The Prioress motioned her to sit by her side, and, when she had obeyed, took her hand. "Dear child, you have of course been considering, in the first place, the foolish wickedness of that vow, as you called it."

This struck so near the truth that Zandrie had to

make a mighty show of defiance and draw away her hand; but Julian's eyes suddenly meeting hers seemed to say "Patience!" so she yielded it up again.

"You 've had time to consider several things," the Prioress went on.

"A vow is a vow," said Zandrie, "in the world at least."

"We consider your hasty, unthinking words not a vow. Understand that, and that it is in no wise because of them that we may possibly choose not to compel you to return with us. But Mr. Furness adds his request — his *request* — to ours, that you come back to the Priory to stay at least a year or two longer!"

Zandrie looked to him, but what she could see of his face gave not a quiver of response. Then her glance wandered to the table that she had dusted, and the sight of one rusty book opened a flood-gate of memories — the contest that he had somehow won, her kiss, and the moonlit night with its ecstacy and imperious longing. Leave him? Even yesterday that might have been possible, but now —"I will not go back," she said, very low.

"Mr. Furness requests it," Sister Gertrude reminded.

"For a year or two only," the Mother repeated. "Take time to consider."

A year or two only, when one-half hour could hold most of eternity! Tears sprang to her eyes. "O no,

no!" Then, "Help me, Julian! You have n't said a word."

At this he turned to the nuns. "Why not speak now to the point?"

The Mother withdrew her hand.

"There 's nothing human in her," said Sister Gertrude. "She is deaf to the wishes of those she calls her best friends. Mr. Furness *requests* —"

Unnerved and trembling, Zandrie rose with an impulse to run away — to run from Julian himself and from an exasperating scene that gave no sign of ending. But he caught her hand.

"Let me go!" she cried, "I hate you all!" The tears brimmed over.

"Sit here by me," and he drew her down to the little stool she loved. She allowed him to although he spoke as to a child. "It 's going to be all right. They won't ask you again to go back. With the nuns' permission, I 'll tell you now what we 've been talking about. I have two good friends in town — the Lyndes. Mrs. Lynde was my aunt's best friend. And I 'll ask her to come this afternoon; and I think she 'll take you home with her for a few days at least, if she has n't other visitors, while we see what can be done — what other home we can find for you."

"Some home — away from here?"

He smoothed the hair back from her forehead. "Why do the tears still come? The convent is past

— in all probability. You 're to be free in earnest, if we can find some work — some means of support for you; and we can, without doubt."

"You mean, a home not here — away from this house?"

"Yes. Of course! What of that?"

"I want to stay here."

Sister Gertrude's hands flew up. Julian spoke gently; "You 'll not make trouble about this. You can't stay here. If Mrs. Lynde can keep you for a while and help you find something to do, you can come here sometimes, if you care to. Go with her quietly, and everything will probably go well. If not — But I have faith in you. Free from the convent and unhappiness, you 'll be yourself — reasonable — and take the word of people who are your friends and old enough to know what 's best in worldly matters at least. Mrs. Lynde will be a good friend, I reckon, and she 'll help find others for you, and a home somewhere — *in the world!* And then you 'll come and tell your old friend Julian about it?"

But she could only hide her face against the arm of his chair.

His hand was on her shoulder. "There, there, little sister! You must be right tired. I 'll send the note right off to Mrs. Lynde. Reverend Mother and Sister Gertrude are going to stay in town over night just to see her. I 'm right sure you 'll be at her house — in a real home — this very evening."

"O you 're beautiful!" And it was probably well for Zandrie that as she whispered this, her back was to the nuns and Julian himself was looking in their direction.

They were rising to go and she was fain to go with them, leaving Mr. Furness to his much interrupted work.

"Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth," Mother Genevieve mused at Mrs. Bright's dining table, where the landlady had consented to give them a dinner in privacy after her boarders' regular meal.

"Sister Loyola reported his sometimes swearing." Sister Gertrude recalled the fact in a non-committal voice.

"And I 'm happy to say," said Zandrie, "that he swears still."

Whereupon, a pause with which the chapter had better end.

CHAPTER XV

THE LYNDES AND A DOCTOR

That evening, even as Julian had predicted, Zandrie dined in a home,— no less delightful for being the home of some one else than herself. And besides, Mrs. Lynde had shown her a room with flowered paper and said "This is yours," instead, for instance, of "Here you may sleep to-night." And now she sat at a table set for three — a dainty thing of gleaming mahogany, furnished with silver and rosebud china that felt terrifyingly frail after the crockery of the convent and Mrs. Bright's.

The chair opposite Mrs. Lynde was empty; her husband had not yet come down stairs, "because," she said, "he smelt of sulphur; and besides, he 'd dipped his cuff into a bright green liquid. Third coat ruined in five weeks. So I 'm going to patch the remains together into an overcoat. He 's neck-deep in a great chemical experiment — which I only hope will ruin nothing but coats. The other day he forgot he was married, though he won't own up to having forgotten more — or less — than dinner. But I know him! — a terrible man enough without chemical accessories to his clothes. Don't be dismayed, dear, by his stentorian

and incessant voice, or fierce glance. He means to be harmless, and I 've got him pretty well under control."

Imagination filled the vacant chair with a form so bristling and sulphurous that Zandrie wondered how any one had consented to live with it. In fact, she asked her hostess; and as the latter dropped her fork and hid her face in her hands, it seemed probable that her feelings were hurt. "I don't know" she murmured before Zandrie could think of an apology. "Ask him!"

"Me?" questioned a placid voice.

Zandrie turned and met the brown, far-apart eyes of a little, round-faced man who held out his hand as though he knew her.

"What do you mean by stealing in the back way?" Mrs. Lynde demanded, as he took the empty chair.

"Clothes-line. Obnoxious coat," he murmured, looking at Zandrie kindly, but perhaps only because he looked at most persons kindly, for his thoughts were manifestly on the purifying virtue of clothes-lines.

"He is n't disagreeable!" Zandrie exclaimed. "I thought you were in earnest — silly me!"

"No," her hostess admitted. "He 's not disagreeable — now. And he 's always good. He married, one day, in a fit of abstraction, and woke up to find it was me; but he 's stood by me as though he 'd meant it from the first."

One could almost see Mr. Lynde's thoughts focus

themselves on his wife's face, slowly but with delight. And it was a charming face, whose play of expression and readiness to flicker with a smile made a curious contrast with the serenity of his. Yet for Zandrie the comparison ended in his favor, perhaps because the far-apart eyes gave comfortable assurance that his moves might sometimes be predicted; for she was weary already of bewilderment.

The placid voice stole into her reflections. "My wife considers me absent-minded."

"O no, dear!" said his wife. "But he has an astral body in which he goes on a jaunt as soon as he 's seated this show body somewhere to keep up domestic appearances; sets it to holding a book, for instance. At which times you shout and apply the poker in vain. . . . Will you pass him this plate? It 's the waitress' afternoon out, and the cook is shy. Josiah dear, please help us both to that salad."

He begged pardon gallantly, his astral body having left courtesy at least behind. "My wife tells me you 're the little convent friend of Julian Furness," he said; and for some reason Zandrie dropped the cracker she was about to bite, and said nothing but "yes."

"He was afraid you might have to stay a long time at the convent, and asked if we could suggest any way to get you out. You showed fine spirit in stepping out yourself."

"I wanted air, and the whole world to work in!"

What especially did she want to do in it? Mrs.

Lynde asked gravely, though a dimple danced under her left eye.

But Zandrie found it impossible to tell even these friendly persons that she wanted first of all to make Julian's life less grim. "I must begin to look for my work to-morrow," she said.

The Lyndes talked of Julian, and of his cousins, the Wyndam twins, who had been his wards since their mother's death. They were now at boarding school, and spent their summers with their grandmother Wyndam at one of the Maine harbors.

"I don't see that he 's much of a guardian," said Zandrie.

"Oh, a model! The twins approve of him entirely. And really, you know, if he were n't so awfully much of the opposite, he 'd be a saint. As it is, he 's merely heroic and moody. But I like his looks — or used to when there was more of his aunt in his face — he was rather a beauty once! but now . . . Well, he likes my jokes and we 're good enough friends though he knows I like hurdy-gurdies better than the Kneisel Quartet. He visits us for a month every summer at our shore house, you know."

"I like him," said Mr. Lynde, whom Zandrie liked henceforth.

After supper they sat by a wood fire in the library, where to her happy eyes, books, pictures, and flame were at first a blur of dream beauty. Over the fireplace hung a photograph of a naked mountain peak

towering out of clouds into a pale sky — surely a captured dream! She laughed with delight.

Mrs. Lynde rose soon. She gave an impression of not sitting very long anywhere. "Come, dear Jo. Those convent ladies will be up on their ear if we 're late. Remember where I said we were going? — but of course you don't! — to the orphan asylum to tease some nuns?" She put an arm about Zandrie. "We hope to begin to settle matters so that you may be quit of nuns forever. You won't mind staying alone for an hour?"

"I 'm used to being alone," she answered. "Besides, in this wonderful room . . ."

Her glance had fallen on a miniature of a young girl with fair hair and very blue eyes.

"I know why that startles you," Mrs. Lynde said. "You recognize the family likeness."

"His aunt?"

"Of course. Miss Emily Marshall a month before her marriage. The twins have the original miniature; that 's only a copy, but it 's good. Queer resemblance — feminine edition — to what Julian used to look like, is n't it. Too bad he had to grow at all like his father. Remember that appalling creature, Jo? — how I had to dance to limber my spirits after meeting him? He brought Julian to visit Emily Wyndam, oh, years ago! — fifteen at least — and shook hands with me — *me!* — as though afraid of encouraging false hopes — positively as though afraid of being sued for

breach of promise. Keep track of yourself, Jo dear, till I get my hat."

After their departure Zandrie stood before the miniature, talking to it aloud but so confidentially that, at the sound of some one entering the room, she wheeled about, not a little discomfited.

It was a man, of Julian's age perhaps, with a high color, a brown beard, and eyes that met hers not at all abashed while he apologized for his intrusion. He turned back to leave his hat and a doctor's case in the hall. Might he come in and wait for the Lyndes? he asked, re-entering cheerfully. The maid had not told him they had a visitor, he said, or he would n't have come in so unceremoniously. He was passing through town, and having a forty-five minute connection, ran up to call here.

"Are you their doctor?"

"No; their friend." He enjoyed his joke prodigiously. "Royce, by name. Some other people's doctor."

Had he shown embarrassment, she might have known better what to do with him; but the very ease which assumed that she was as much at home in this complicated world as himself, destroyed her own. Something, at least, destroyed it.

As he was standing with an arm on the mantel-shelf, she asked him to sit down.

"Thank you. Will you?"

"I 'd . . . rather stand."

He gave her a quick glance — of amusement? — and continued to stand. No one had succeeded so well in making her feel her ignorance of worldly ways; he was so plainly master of a code of which she knew nothing; and he seemed somehow aware of the fact. From flames of embarrassment, anger leapt up, soon however to turn against herself. "Little fool!" she told herself, "he 's only a man." And then, as though this thought were heartening, she said, "I wish you would sit down. If you 're a doctor, you must be tired."

"You flatter me!" But there was no ridicule in his laugh, after all. "I 'll be glad to sit down, just the same — after you."

That reminded her of Julian's remark about hating to keep his seat while a lady stood. If she were a prioress, such scruples would be intelligible; but for a full-grown man to treat her with such deference . . . ! It was rather delightful, however.

When she had sat down close to the hearth, "Perhaps you 'll be so kind as to tell me whom I 'm speaking to?" the doctor suggested.

She gave him her full name, for which he thanked her; and then he begged pardon very graciously for consulting his watch. "Sixteen minutes' grace. I 'm afraid I 'll miss the Lyndes if they 're making a call?"

She told him they were at the orphan asylum.

"A little out of their usual beat! They 're not going to adopt an orphan?"

"Only me," she said, "and for only a little while . . . I've run away from a convent in Maryland, you see, and the nuns have come to recapture me, but are going back empty-handed and full of wrath."

Dr. Royce's eyes were so round that she had to laugh. Naturally, he asked for fuller information; and what she gave held his undivided attention. "And then," she ended, "I came north to find . . . some friends. And the nuns came after me to do their duty; but I vowed to kill myself if they forced me back."

It is plain that her explanation, though detailed in spots, was not quite complete. She had not mentioned Julian, for instance.

"So you see," she added, "why I did n't know what to do with you when you came in — I know so little about what people do in the world. And I don't know now why you would n't sit down till after me, though you 're so much older."

He regarded her with undisguised delight. "Good!" he exclaimed in an undertone. "It 's dramatic — the whole thing. But . . . O pshaw! — time 's up! It always is up — even for young doctors — just when the fun 's beginning. Glad to have met you, Miss Donallon. That 's what people usually say in the world, you know, only not often so sincerely. Please tell the Lyndes I 'm sorry . . . Hope to be here again soon, and . . . Good night! Good luck in the world!"

His exit was as a whirlwind's.

She lay back, watching a flame that danced fairily on the embers. Truly the world was full of interesting things — which she began to count over in drowsy enjoyment. There was Julian; and there were hill-tops; and mercurial young doctors with amused eyes; and rosebud china, and miniatures, and babies, and little turkeys — and miniatures . . . and Julian . . . The list stretched from Mrs. Bright's to the Lawson farm — for Lawson was her name, the farmer's wife had said — and how could one count with somebody interrupting so?

It was Mrs. Lynde's voice, and Zandrie woke.

"Excellent ladies!" her hostess was saying. "But we hope you 'll like us better. The Prioress is rather splendid though." She took Zandrie's face between her hands. "Poor bird, you 've been asleep. Well, sleep soundly to-night, for you 're not going back to the convent. I want you here instead, for the present; and after that — But why think of 'afters'? I never do. The nuns will send your worldly goods in a few days. Meanwhile I can lend you things. Come, dear, to bed."

Zandrie kissed the cordial lady's hands. Words of affection always opened the gates of Paradise wide enough to dazzle her.

"A rather intense person," Mrs. Lynde observed to her husband.

Without question, she was.

It was not till the next day that she remembered to tell of the doctor's call. "A very dark, homely man. At least, not exactly homely; but I hate brown beards and —"— she saved herself from adding "dark eyes," remembering that her hostess' eyes were brown and not utterly displeasing. Blue were to be preferred, however, even when their blue fire would burn into one's heart, eating up alike its petty troubles and its peace, transmuting stolid contentments to a white rapture that left one dry-lipped and wide-eyed to search the night for its sleep. Well might one ask what had "happened."

But she was an intense person, without doubt.

CHAPTER XVI

AN AGREEMENT

In the morning Zandrie sat on the edge of her bed and delivered herself a heavy sermon under two heads; submission and patience. This very day she would begin to seek advice and give heed, for Julian was right; during the first few days in the unexplored world, obedience had decidedly better be her watchword. Before she had pushed this train of reflection much farther however, a wave of impatience swept her to her feet. After all, her chief concern for the present must be with Julian himself; he was so lonely.

At breakfast, which she had alone with her hostess, Mr. Lynde having finished and gone to his laboratory, she announced her intention of going to see Julian within the next half hour; "and with his permission," she said, "I shall read a novel. And for the rest — well, I 'll have to find out."

"The rest?" Mrs. Lynde questioned.

"My work in the world. I don't know yet what it is, but it 's waiting for me somewhere." This comfortable idea had been suggested by the Rev. George

Deming. "I think I 'd better be starting now," she added, folding her napkin.

"On your work in the world?"

"To see Julian."

"But my dear little hurricane, it 's only nine."

"What of that?"

"He is n't expecting callers yet."

"He begins work at nine."

"Then he ought n't to be interrupted so soon."

These flippant objections were irritating enough, but the next, that she did not know the way and must not go alone, was absurd — she who had done nothing but find her way since leaving the convent! It rather savored of the convent.

"Wait half an hour," Mrs. Lynde added, "and we 'll go together. It really is my duty as your hostess, under the circumstances, to go with you."

Zandrie made a gallant effort not to pout.

"You know, surely," her hostess went on, "that I would n't — that no one would willingly do a thing to spoil the fun of your new freedom."

"No one has the right."

"No, perhaps not. Yet before leaving the nuns last night, Mr. Lynde and I agreed to be responsible for you. We really had to if you were to stay."

Now this was both inexplicable and alarming. Julian had already said that her coming to him had made him responsible. How many were there to be? "What does that mean?" she demanded.

Mrs. Lynde explained patiently that in the eyes of the law she was still a child. After her sister died, the nuns had taken it upon themselves, in the way of charity to herself and respect for Sister Angela, to provide her with clothing, food, and shelter. As she had no property, there had been no need of legal proceedings. But before consenting to relinquish that volunteered guardianship, Mother Genevieve had required assurance that some one else would take it up, and the Lyndes had promised to assume the responsibility.

"I feel like a bird caught in a net!" cried Zandrie. "I did n't want any more guardians and I won't have them!" And she was up and for running away at once, but was stopped in the doorway by a dawning realization that she was behaving not quite as one should who has outgrown the need of all guardianship in the world. In fact, she was recalling that heavy sermon of the early morning.

"I 'm sorry," said Mrs. Lynde; "if we had known how you felt — You see, the nuns told us you had no money, and we did n't see how you could possibly get along without our help, except by going back to the convent — because of course it would n't do for Julian to provide for you, much as he would like to. And so we thought you might like to stay with us, at least till we found some other home — some other way of living, you know. It was n't with any idea of restraining — only of helping."

Zandrie hid her face in her hands. "Oh! Oh! I begin to see!" When she felt an arm about her neck, she caught up the hand to her lips. "Forgive me," she whispered. "I was wicked and ungrateful."

"You 're a darling. You did n't understand — that 's all. But you do now, and you 'll stay with us for a while and try it, won't you? I 'm very much alone, you see, with Mr. Lynde away in his laboratory all day. I want somebody to play with so! Now come and get ready. We 'll go to Julian this minute."

The scene ended, of course, with Zandrie's hugging Mrs. Lynde and vowing a great vow to herself, which was to obey as submissively henceforth as Sister Gertrude obeyed her Superior; to seek advice and to give heed.

"Is n't it romantic!" Mrs. Lynde said to Julian, "the nuns have yielded her up and she 's going to stay with us. You know it already, but never mind; I have to talk about it to everybody I see. She 's a dear, queer little child — the sort one can't keep one's hands off. But we 'll lend her sometimes if you 're very good — now, for instance. Keep him out of that stupid work, my dearest, till I come back, for I 've got to go down town on a tie hunt. Mr. Lynde on the sly wore his Sunday necktie to the laboratory and used it to tie the end of something to a retort, which retorted by blowing up. He did n't tell a very coherent tale himself, but he looked pretty sheepish when he got home — and rather negligé."

A brand-new shyness of Julian left Zandrie with nothing to say. He was apparently in the same plight.

"Has the wicked man been to see you lately?" Mrs. Lynde turned at the door to ask. "I thought not! He started last Sunday but got on the track of a mathematical solution of something, and recovered consciousness over a milking stool in the Lawsons' barnyard. Next time he 'll have an alarm clock tied to his ear."

She sped away laughing at her own jokes.

And now that Zandrie was alone with Julian, there fell away from her not only the shyness, but all remembrance of the advice that she was to seek. "Are you glad to see me?" was what she asked instead.

"Glad would n't express it," he answered with a smile that sent delight tingling to her finger tips. "But the devil will get me if I don't finish this in ten minutes. Then we 'll talk — hey?"

At the end of the ten minutes, the spirited Billy burst in, balancing on one palm a pile of galleys that he transferred to Julian's knees with legerdemain skill. At sight of Zandrie, he grinned and winked an undauntable gray eye. "Seen her comin' in with another party. She 's a cracker-jack, aint she? Most as peachy as my girl! Comin' quite often now, aint she? I bet she 'll be livin' here for good an' all, one of these days."

"Come back here!" Julian shouted; but the clatter

of Billy's feet on the stairs must have drowned his voice.

Zandrie backed away from Julian with her stool, in a purely factitious fright. He was scarlet with some sort of genuine emotion.

"Confound it!" he burst out; "that 's what you 're subjected to because I 'm tied here like a damned rag doll and can't hit out. . . . O my stars! Now I 've done it! I beg your pardon."

She assured him as usual that she never minded swearing. "There! I thank the saints that you 'll smile again! Now, if the Billy storm is over, talk to me. I 've so much to tell!"

"That you 've chosen another guardian, or run into more debt?"

She stamped with vexation, but told him of the Lyndes' kind offer, including the scene that she had made; and then about the young doctor.

Julian had never heard of him.

"No? But we had a beautiful talk till he whisked out of my sight to catch a train. I liked him almost as well as you."

"Don't believe it. What was your beautiful talk about?"

"That I 'll never tell!" Perhaps she intended to tell after all, however, and would have done so but for the intrusion of a new idea. "Julian! Mr. and Mrs. Lynde kiss each other whenever they want to!"

"Well, why the deuce should n't they?"

"Exactly! Why should n't they? But I thought you said that morning — O dear! just what did you say?"

"The Lyndes are married —"

"Yes! And only married people can express their friendship? You tried to explain, but I 'm all twisted again."

"Take my word for it, then."

"But your word for what?"

"For this, madam: that the condition of your coming here is that you shan't ask me to explain anything. Anything whatever! I can't do it."

"You precious silly! The Lyndes are married, as you say; so —"

"I 'd rather talk about the doctor!"

"I 'd rather talk about the Lyndes and *us*."

"Ask Mrs. Lynde all questions in future. She knows lots more about the world than innocent me!"

"O very well! It 's a queer world, and I 'll ask Mrs. Lynde and every one I meet, about it — every one but you."

"Thank you," he said cheerfully. "Henceforth the subject is tabooed."

"Of friendship?"

He made a gesture of despair. "Yes, exactly; of friendship."

She shook her head. "I 'll do my best. But I can

surely tell *you* how much I love you? That is n't 'the subject'?"

"If you love me a whole *lot*, of course —"

"I do when you laugh like that!"

"But I reckon it 'll simplify matters if you don't." We 'll agree it 's part of the forbidden subject."

"O me!" she sighed, "then I 'll have to keep a strict watch over my tongue."

And in less than fifteen minutes, she had tripped. He was questioning her about her debts, and suggesting that it would be better to owe whatever she might owe, to one person only. He would be her clearing house, he said; in fact, he had already given the Prioress a check for Mrs. McClung. But how about Mr. Fink? Did she know his address?

She produced his card from her pocket.

Julian produced a check book from his, and wrote. "I 'm sorry to bother you and Mrs. Lynde," he said, "but it will be a little better if she sends this herself — if she writes the note."

"Why not write it myself? I 'd like to!"

"Because your chaperon tells you not to." He threw back his head with another laugh.

"You are most wonderfully curious," she said gravely, "you, who once seemed the most understandable of all. I 'll let Mrs. Lynde write the note, then — if you 'll talk to me, please, about yourself."

"Don't tempt many men that way! You might meet a bore, some day!"

She ignored his levity. "I know so very little about even your life!"

"I thank the saints for that."

"You were a musician, and a mighty rider, and went abroad; and then —"

"To be sure! And then I fell into a bad dream, and woke to find a little girl of whom I was afraid —"

"O never! You did with her exactly as you pleased. And after that —"

He smiled wickedly. "And after that, a long but inactive career in a plaster jacket; and a powerful lot of language not made for ladies; and a new valet carried out on a shutter every third day — Not so inactive, maybe, after all! Carter was the ninth in six months. He 's going to get a medal for valor."

"He says you don't heave projectiles any more."

"He told —? Confound him! No — it did n't pay. O pshaw! whenever I try to talk about myself, you quote Carter and say you know better."

"There 's one thing he says "— she caught her breath —"that I can't bear to believe."

"So he 's been telling more tales!"

"He says — he says that you have pain still. And he says you don't make a fuss about it."

"Carter 's evidently losing his mind."

Though knowing herself on the forbidden ground now, she went on. "I 'm ashamed to call my cowardly self your friend. My imprisonment has been

Paradise beside yours — yes, for I knew that freedom was coming."

"One gets used to anything. I've forgotten how freedom felt."

"And the pain that you can't forget?"

"I hate it. We won't talk about it, ever."

"And the lost music, and the lost everything that makes life worth living? Ah! you see you've nothing to answer. You're the bravest man I know."

"And you've known how many?" But after a pause, "Yes," he said, not meeting her eyes, "I can answer. There were times when I used to think I'd lost everything — damnable times, too,— and the coward in me almost got the best of it. But then —"

"Well, what then?"

"Then my aunt — I don't know how she worked it, but she made me see that a man can't lose all that's most worth while, after all, except by his own will — or lack of it."

"O yes," said Zandrie, understanding not at all.

"I reckon it's true," he said, "for, don't you see, if the things that are most worth while aren't the things you fight for, but the fight itself, for instance — then you've got your fate by the collar, after all. Life would be a pretty godless puzzle if — Anyhow, there's a lot of fun in a fight." After a pause, "I've got a pile of good ideas, haven't I? Apply to Carter to find out how I've lived up to them!"

It was the first time in the renewal of their friendship that he had taken her seriously, but although she was having to sit on her hands to keep them within bounds, she might have succeeded, perhaps, but for what came next; for, "I don't even keep my temper," he went on, with appealing candor; "yet I do try a lot. Only last night, Carter tried to turn me into a corkscrew, and I did n't swear."

Zandrie sat harder on her poor hands. "I should hope not! Does — does Carter often do such things to you?"

"Heaven forbid! But I often swear."

"He looks like a June-bug and I hate him!" But all at once the unruly hands shot out to him in a motion of passionate yearning. "Julian! Julian darling!"

Then, in a fright, she ran to the window and stood there, trembling at the tempest of pity and love that had flung the words from her before she had known they were there. It was the newness of passion that frightened so. Though knowing that she had done no wrong, she looked at him at last, half expecting a rebuke.

His eyes sought hers with a question — a moment's perplexity. Then, with a shove of the hair from his forehead, his hand swept away the frown. "You 're a child," he said as though in explanation of something. An irrelevant remark — puzzling, but of small importance beside the smile by which she was reas-

sured that she had not been at fault. "I evidently owe Carter an apology," he said. "He 's the best fellow I know. I did n't mean — I was only speaking of my temper, which is awful, but on the mend. . . . Well, are n't you coming back?"

"I think I must go," she faltered; for within the minute, the horrid shyness had her writhing again in its grip. She drew a quivering breath, looked out of the window, and, finding no inspiration in Mrs. Bright's clothes-poles, turned desperately back to Julian. Go? Leave him? They were the irresponsible words of embarrassment. The whimsical gods of the world permitting, she would never leave him again for so much as an hour. Yet he was strange and she feared him — feared something — who could say what? His next words ushered her straight into a maze of puzzled misery.

"I 'm sorry you must go," he said politely. "You and Mrs. Lynde will come again soon, of course?"

She stared at him, baffled, hurt, tears gathering. He saw, and frowned with perplexity again. "I beg your pardon," he said at last. "I don't know what 's the matter, but — Good heavens! what *is* the matter? Come here!"

She came, and let him take her hand as though she were a child.

"Tell me the trouble," he said. But she hardly heard, knowing only the warm grasp of his hands.

"What is it?"

"Nothing." One of the tears trickled down her cheek, but she was no longer unhappy; the shyness had gone. "I'm *not* crying!" she added, giving his hand a defiant little shake; "and I'm not going either!"

"I 'm right glad of both items."

"And I 'm coming every day."

"I 'd like to have you, but —"

"Then I 'll come."

"But — Well, to be uncivil but to the point,— I 'll have to ask you not to come again till next Sunday. I 've got to! You understand, don't you?"

"It 's a plain saying."

"Zandrie! You *must* understand! I 'd like mighty well to see you sooner, but Carter 's in here working with me a lot of the time, and — Mrs. Lynde will agree with me."

"Saints preserve us! Why?"

"That 's not sticking to the agreement. Ask 'why' of her. I must work, for one thing; but —"

"But Carter said you did n't have to work; and if you 'd really like me to come sooner —"

"I really should, but —"

"Then I 'll come to-morrow. I 'll read a novel and turn the pages without a single crackle to disturb you."

"You will come henceforth," said Julian, "on Sundays only."

And in the end she had to yield. Verily, a mad world.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN JUNE

Wonderful days, these, the first in the world, though as full of bewilderment as of joyous wonder. Life with the Lyndes alone was a snarl of perplexities, for all that they were solving what must otherwise have been the stiffest problem of all, by keeping her week after week as their guest, silencing her with hospitable laughter when she chanced to remember the dying dream of the work awaiting her. "Wait a little," they said, as though she were not perfectly willing to wait till doomsday. Her sense of obligation for the supplying of daily needs was in exact proportion to her worldly knowledge, which her life still held to the measure of a child's. Throughout the convent days, food and shelter were taken for granted, accepted without question of her right, being there for one's need — that was all — as grass for the beasts'. The nuns' few references to her dependence on others had no meaning for her, for the simple reason that the supply had never failed. It was there without her asking, the obvious, every-day, commonplace fact. No one had suggested that it could fail.

But the gift of love was another matter; and courtesy must be met with courtesy, whose demands kept conflicting distractingly with one's right of freedom, till there would creep in sometimes a sense of having been snared by very kindness, and a teasing resentment against the Lyndes themselves. Who would not be petulant at finding a net-work of hindrances where one had come to look for all delight? But her hostess was doubtless right in pronouncing her a little "difficult" as well as intense, at times.

Her dream of the world had been a whirl of rainbow mists, and like most dreams, soon forgotten. Even that happy chimera, her work in the world, was forgotten at last — and forever. She was one of those for whom few facts are facts until linked to some central emotion. Given the emotion, life, whether for better or for worse, becomes simple at least. And Julian had provided it from her very young girlhood. Her life had become simpler still when she kissed him on the forehead, the morning after her coming. He was from that hour forth the meaning of reality, the pivot of her motives, shoving from her thought whatever had no kinship with himself. And except at the first, she wondered not at all that this should be so, but thought about Julian himself instead.

Even the pink dress given her by Mrs. Lynde did not become a real delight until he had seen her wear it. "Do you know me?" she cried. "Zandrie in

pink ruffles, and her hair up! I 'm all of the world now." And she found it strange that he only sat staring solemnly, with folded arms. "O you!"— and she stamped her foot —" have n't I forbidden you to look at me so? No one knows what 's happening behind your eyes. And to do it now! — now! You glare as though I were a daughter of Heth. Of course I know my hair 's as black as ever; but these darling ruffles and pink roses . . ."

Yet for all the roses on her hat, he was abominably silent that day, and for minutes together she would see what she called his " stranger look "— a look that, while she dared to scold him, yet frightened her with a sense of aloofness, for it came at seconds when their comradeship seemed closest, and built a wall between them. " What is it then? " she ventured once. " Why do you shut yourself up in a queer, hard shell? You seem in a sort of feud with yourself, and I never know on which side to find you! Is anything the matter? If so, friends are for helping one another, and — I want to be your friend."

" And I want to be yours," he had answered slowly, and then asked an abrupt question about the Lyndes.

Perhaps she was right in saying that no one knew what went on behind his eyes — especially when one turned in the doorway to find in them a look that was part a question, but mostly — ah, that was just what one could n't tell. But then, she had never yet thought to ask whether he loved her, or what would

come of it if he did. Her passion was still too young to define its wants, too satisfied with its own being to ask why it existed. It meant Julian now, and the future meant Julian.

June came in like a dragon, growling and breathing fire; and on the first Sunday, Zandrie had to set out proclaiming her special love of lightning and water, in the face of a thunderstorm and the Lyndes' protests. Even Mr. Lynde — whose "real" name she said was "Poggy," which she called him ever after — even he had failed to believe in that love of lightning and water, and sent for a coupé, which, to keep the peace, she had ridden in for a block and then dismissed. As for Julian, he was for sending her back because her shoes were wet.

"Is there always such confusion in the world," she asked petulantly, "when a body steps out in the rain? In the convent days I splashed in the wet as much as I liked. The rain? why, it would never think of harming. Every drop is a message — think! out of Heaven itself! — that some day things will all be pure and good, and the thunder shakes out a threat because they're not better. I love it, every bit. So do you!"

"Rain? I've even forgotten how it feels."

She ran to the window to catch a handful of drops falling from the eaves; then, with a laugh and before he could catch her wrist, she had shaken them over his hair and laid her wet palm across his forehead.

His own hand closed on hers, and he looked up with a smile that pushed her fear of him over the edge of a well of delight and broke a chink in the wall between them.

"'La belle dame sans merci'," he said at last; and she knew he by no means referred to her shower.

"Ah no,— your heaven! for I sent rain upon you."

"Let heaven do its own work, and go back to your seat."

She did not move. "How did my shower feel, then?"

"Wet and cold."

Her left hand was on the back of his chair, very near his hair; if she stirred, perhaps fear would come shivering up out of the well and plug the hole in the wall,— the little hole that his smile had made. "When I was a child," she said very low, "I loved you because you could do what you pleased with me; but that's not why I love you now,— be sure!" She was more than three-quarters in earnest in spite of her little laugh. "Am I on the forbidden ground? It must be an island about which my life flows, for whenever I put my hand out, there it is . . . O me! You were right: the world is strange, and I know almost nothing else about it, though I saw so much of it this week!" She probably referred to the half-dozen girls whom Mrs. Lynde asked to lunch.

"Tell me about it," he said; and his tone, like something waking one from a dream, brought confusion,

and then a chilly sense of reality. "Sit down," he added. But still she would not be afraid of him quite yet.

"My week was a year long," she said. "Was yours shorter?"

"Short enough."

She smiled vaguely, and then laid her hand on his hair. She had been summoning courage to do it, for a full minute. He gripped both arms of his chair. "It feels as it used," she murmured, "but it 's darker; almost brown. No, not really brown; still full of gold."

"Sit down," he commanded, a little hoarsely.

She obeyed; but she was not afraid — oh no! — though his face was turned away. "You were with me in the woods yesterday," she said. "Did you know it? But you 're always with me there. But yesterday — yesterday we had such a *very* particularly good time together."

At that, he looked at her with a wistfulness that had sometimes stolen into his eyes of late.

"Were *you* happy there?" she asked.

He still looked at her.

"Would you like to go back?"

"Show me the way," he answered.

"To my woods?"

"To mine," he said after a pause; and added, "Where I must go alone, after all. . . ."

She leaned forward. "Julian — you 're not alone,

— not any more. And you can come to the woods too,— to mine; I 'll take you. Yes! yes! Shut your eyes and see if I can't!" She moved her stool nearer still. "I can do it. *I* 'm there now! Shut your eyes — *please!* . . . There! We 're just turning off from the road. Do you see? we must wriggle through the bars where the cart-track leads into the field and winds about the foot of the hill. The hillside 's bristling here with stones and brambles, yet if you 'll look, there are violets with short stems; and on the other side of those birches — they 've wandered away from the rest, you see,— the hill 's all blazing with wild azalea. But wait. We must keep on to the top. There 's no path, but the rocks make steps. . . . O look! one poor, late columbine! But they 're always sad in spite of their robes of sunlight; they try to deceive, I said, till I understood. But look up now and see the army of grasses against the sky. *They* 're shams! To-day they 're standing stiff enough, but when the wind calls to battle, they tremble and lie flat; so their bravery of spears is only a show. And look, where the ghostly moon haunts the tree-tops, as white as a cloud and just ready to melt back into the blue. . . . O Julian! to think you 're really with me here at last!" Her own eyes were shut now. "Now we 're up where we can see the town — almost the windows of the very room where you used to lie all day — and there 's the red farm-house. The roofs and chimneys and the fairy

tree-tops lie all unreal under the strips and twists of purple smoke. The gold cross on the spire there burns through the mist; that 's real. . . . But the other way! Look off to the hills. To-day they 're rugged and earnest, but some days they sleep and are dim with mists which are their dreams. Do you see them? Do you see them? But come into the woods themselves — into the place where all the green things stand up unafraid. . . . See the laurel leaves glistening, and the rosy specks of the buds. Feel the slippery floor of needles and the twigs that catch at us; and see the starry pines. Oh, the pines! There 's a breeze overhead. Oh, and the brown bird that sings a song of ferns uncurling and of water in the shadow of a rock. . . . Now — now we 'll go down the hill on the other side, by the swamp where lazy old Jack-priests doze in the shade of their little pulpits, and water trickles through the fairy forests of moss, and silver drops slide down long, smooth stems. There 's quiet there as big as the sky. We 're alone there, you and I. Come there!" and she held out her hand. His eyes met hers, and he took it; but in the light in his eyes, she forgot the touch, for it was the look of which she had dreamed on the night of moonlight and wild yearning, when she had been drawn to his door as by a chain; a look that drew the strength from her body, pouring ecstacy into every pore, annulling thought

and sense. Body was forgotten; ecstacy alone was left, at one with the blue fire of the eyes that had kindled it, burning away the chains of time. While it stayed, she held her breath. At last his grasp relaxed; and very slowly, his eyes still compelling her own, he put away her hand. Then as with effort he turned his face away; and with the movement, the spell was broken and life stepped back into its old setting of time and space.

The wind flung handfuls of rain against the window. Julian's lips were set and pale. He was already slipping from her, behind the wall; she was losing him and must call him back. So his name broke from her like a cry. "Speak to me," she pleaded, "I 'm afraid."

But he sat rigid, unheeding; and the wind rattled a loose pane of glass.

He was manifestly in one of those feuds with himself, about which she was still in the dark. Of only one thing she was sure — that they were not struggles with pain. Those must be different; instinct persuaded her that in those, the wall between them must be lower, not higher. But from these battles she knew only that he would come out estranged, aloof; an unaccountable, fierce Julian that refused to smile and could even order her to leave him; so that whatever their meaning, they gave her dread. Would he find it in his heart to send her away now, after that

look in which his very soul had held out a hand to hers? That was unbelievable. Yet she watched his face, waiting for the order. And it came.

"Go back!" he said, a strange trembling in his voice. "Go back to the convent! . . . It will be better — for both of us."

"You would really have me?"

No answer, except her own. "No; for you said you wanted to be my friend, and I 'll dare to believe you."

"You 've no friend in me," he murmured at last.

"I don't know what you or I have done, that you say such a thing."

Again no answer.

"Why were you afraid?" he asked, after the pause.

"You were with me — for the first time." Her own voice trembled now. "And then you were slipping from me — after you took my hand."

"Forget that, for Heaven's sake."

"I could n't if I wanted. That you know."

Did he know? Perhaps; but he gave no sign. "Forgive me," he said. "I did n't mean to frighten you. I — I 'm much to blame. We ought to have stayed in the woods."

"I 'd rather stay here." She sat with tightly clasped hands. "I love this room better than all the windy, woodsy out-of-doors; this queer, beautiful

room that no one dusts but Carter and me. It 's strange —"

"It *is* strange," he interrupted rather grimly. "It 's all strange — the whole thing." He stopped. A little flush spread over his face. "It — it must n't go on, you know."

"What must n't?"

A long pause, till she repeated the question.

"You 're only a child," he said, "but — it would n't be right anyway,— I believe. . . . Of course not . . . But it 's been my fault, of course, that we have n't — kept to our agreement better."

"What agreement?"

"You know."

Yes, she knew. But, "What 's the use?" she asked. "I 've lived a whole five weeks in the world, and it still seems nonsense that we should n't speak the truth."

"It is n't the truth!"

"You know — we both know —"

"I don't know it!"

"Then you 're very stupid." But she knew also that he understood.

"We must try to help each other," he went on, "to keep it better — our agreement."

"About — the forbidden subject?"

"If we failed,—" he said.

"I hope we shall!"

"But I think we need n't fail," he added, after a long pause.

"And if we do?"

"I don't know — exactly. We — might n't see each other any more, I suppose, for one thing."

"But you could n't keep me away!"

"I could and would."

The mere set of his lips frightened her so that she called desperately on humor to help her. "How rude it would look! People would hear a lady pleading at your door, and marvel at your gruffness. But I would n't put you in such a light; I 'd climb quietly in at the window."

He met her laughter with a lame attempt at a frown.

"Now you 're reasonable!" she cried. "Smile *all the way,* and I 'll — tell you something!"

"I was in earnest," he said.

"About forcing a guest —"

"About — you know what."

"Indeed no!"

"Then you 're very stupid! . . . And if you don't go home now, this minute, while the rain has stopped — I 'll ring for Carter to carry you!"

"You 're really tired of me, then?"

"You —! Do you really doubt it?"

"No, I don't."

She reached for her rain-coat, pouting.

And the hook of the collar was of course to blame

for what happened next. It refused to find the eye, persuading her after a minute of half-hearted struggle, to kneel by Julian's side for help. And before she rose, she dared herself to a reckless act, and took the dare; caught and kissed the hand that he was withdrawing. Her laugh rang out as she jumped away. She had never kissed him since the morning when she found her hill; but her kiss to-day was a little piece of pure, unexpected deviltry.

Yet in her heart of hearts she was afraid. Unreasonable, incomprehensible though it was, the threat not to let her come to him filled her with an uneasiness that would not be downed. There was a will behind his eyes that had already bent hers again and again. She must run no risks, she told herself. And during all the week that followed, she was building up stanch resolutions not to show by word or act how well she loved him; lest somehow she should lose him.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE NORTHWEST WIND

It was this vague uneasiness that on the following Sunday whispered an artifice. She would not hurry to him as usual, but, to prove that she loved him none too well, she would go elsewhere first,— an idea that pleased her mightily till she came to its practice. For invisible hands were dragging her to his door, pulling her down the street till she caught a glimpse of his door-step. There she made a stand, though the battle raged. It was a week since she had heard his voice — seven days of famine. He was awaiting her at this moment,— wanting her, perhaps. Yes, she believed that he wanted her very much; and yet — again came recollection of his strange threat, and the dread that had haunted her throughout the week. A foolish dread, that, for all its absurdity, made her wheel about at last and walk doggedly on towards the hill, where she arrived by no means rejoicing in her strength.

But there was a northwest wind on the hill-top, singing in the trees that swung with it while Zandrie ran with it. Sunlight danced on boughs and ground like mad, scattering patches of brightness for the wind

to play battledore with. Sometimes they fell on the laurel, touching the blossoms to liquid silver; then off again, anywhere, nowhere,— the wind never stopped to see; it was having a game with the birch tops now, and the sunbeams were caught in its garments. Bird-notes thrilled out on the gusts, to be snatched unfinished out of hearing. Sometimes she called back, but the wind and she were racing and she could not wait for an answer. Out of breath now and then, she stopped for a spray of laurel. It was out in full bloom at last, its bushes all rosy and waxen and silver. Yet the blossoms shivered and glimmered coldly between the tree-trunks, for in spite of June, the day was as chilly as early April. Even without the call of the wind she would have run to keep warm; but the giant gusts took her, and in the delight of their tumultuous strength she felt neither weariness nor cold. She was part of the big wind-game, and intoxicated as the birds.

But when the sun swung so low that its rays slanted between the tree-trunks into her eyes, then she stopped with her arms full of laurel, and looked towards the town. In the riotous fun of the northwest wind she had not felt the loneliness of the wide hill-top,— not until this moment. But now the sight of the town stabbed her with a quick yearning. That joy of the wind and singing trees, which but a moment since had seemed reality at its richest,— already it had faded to a dream, and "oh, but the long way back

to town!" she sighed. She had come farther than her bond required.

A turn of the door-knob at last, a single step forward, and the face for which she had hungered through seven days would be there to see, perhaps with the light of the low-hanging sun on the hair, and in the eyes — surely — surprised gladness. But she gripped the stems of the laurel with a will, for she was going to be good; sun or no sun on his hair, she was going to be never so good. She would laugh and chatter as she had heard other girls chatter to men in the world, no word of forbidden love escaping. Why not? She thought it would even be easy. She would lock down every sign of love, lest somehow she should lose him.

She thought it would be easy, even after she had opened the door, to find him lying on the couch instead of sitting in his chair as usual. She crossed to him in silence and laid the laurel on his breast. "Why are you lying here?" she asked.

"For variety."

"I hate a lie!" and she clasped her hands under her chin. "Have you been here long?"

"Only since five. I thought — Where have you been? I thought you were n't coming. Look at that clock!"

She smiled — ruefully — at the success of her trick.

"So late? I can't believe it. I blew away in the woods. But see what I got on the way!"

He looked only at her, however.

"Look,— the laurel! I thought of you now and then, and broke off a spray."

"And the rest of the time?"

"I ran like an animal. But had n't you better count the sprays?"

"Why?"

"Why, stupid, to find out how often I thought of you. You could easily count!"

Yet it was not so easy — this part she had chosen. When she had promised to be good, she had not bargained to find him on his back. And the bewilderment into which she was bringing him, helped her so little that she had to turn away now and walk to the window. When she had opened it to the gale that whirled in like a mad spirit of fun, she laughed, to be sure. But she could hardly stand there and laugh at the wind till she started for home. No need to, either! She was strong enough of will to stand beside him again looking down at him quite calmly, showing nothing of the delight at the mere sight of him, that made a mist at moments between his face and her eyes; showing nothing even when the traitor pity jumped out and sent an arrow quivering through her; showing nothing . . .

After all, it was her own device that undid her.

For she had taught him of late to arm himself against quite another than a mood of teasing, which puzzled him the more now, perhaps, because he was in bodily pain and must have known that she knew it. And so, as he lay with his hands clasped beneath his head, she saw his face grow wistful with a question that groped for its answer, till, losing itself at last, it turned into a yearning. She thrust her hands behind her, but to no purpose; impulses to caress throbbed along every fibre of her body, getting the upper hand over warnings of fear. And then when of a sudden his eyes opened to her, without reserve at last, no longer baffling, but summoning, bidding her come near, — the fear itself was gone. The wall was gone. She thought it was gone forever. And so, in an ecstacy too deep for fear to reach, she sat down on the edge of his couch and bent over him, slowly, very slowly, till the flood of passion that had been forced back throughout the long weeks, burst its bounds, tearing away all but consciousness itself. With the cry of his name she took his temples between her hands and pressed her cheek against his forehead.

For a few seconds he lay passive; then he pulled her down to him, crushing the laurel between them, and kissed her lips; and though she spoke hardly above a whisper, all her stifled passion made answer in the two words, "My master!"

At last he tried to put her from him, with hands that trembled, but she caught them in her own. "Ju-

lian! you understand at last! We 've lived for this. There 'll be no more loneliness — only happiness beyond belief."

But he was staring up at her as in a maze of growing misery that took the blood from his lips, and he tried to draw away his hands.

"We 'll marry each other,"— she laughed a soft little laugh —"— marry like the Lyndes. Don't you understand? You 'll let me live with you now and talk about my love, and there 'll be no more forbidden subject. I 'll help you in all things, my darling,— my darling! I 'll make life a good thing for you. I can! O yes, but I can!"

The idea of their marrying — which meant, their living together — seemed so simple, so inevitable of a sudden, that she laughed to think it had never occurred to either of them before! "Of course," she said, "we 've lived just for this. Why have n't we known it? Stupid us!"

He wrenched his hands from hers, to cover his face, but she kissed them and kissed his hair, thinking only that he was in pain, for which she could not grieve much just now. Pain was a slight thing, of a sudden, compared with the great matter of their love. "It will go," she said, smoothing his hair. "When Zandrie comes to stay, it will have to go. O dearie! my beautiful! think of the good times! No more dreadful, empty weeks one can scarcely breathe through till Sunday. No more running to my hill

from the fear of you! But we 'll go together — O yes, Carter can manage that! — and eat our lunch in the moss by a great rock where the brown bird sings and the little gray gnomes will come out of the cracks to pick up the crumbs. To think — to think that Julian will be Zandrie's husband. It sounds very strange, but I like it! I was thinking of you always, of course — always — but never quite *so*. Husbands never seemed interesting till this very minute! Dearie, look up and laugh with me!"

She had been looking away from him for a minute, just because it would be such fun at the end of the minute! But the fun failed her. She even forgot that she had expected it, what she found in his eyes was so nearly tragic, the whole set of his face so grim with unspoken misery. No pain of body, that: and when he covered his face again at the end of the long silence, and the muscles of his hands grew tense, and his breath struggled from beneath almost in sobs, her joy fell into the clutch of a nameless fear. "What is it?" she asked in a voice that shook.

At last, "I could n't help it," he said, his hands still over his face. "It 's been a long fight." And after another pause, "I can't marry you."

"Why?"

"I won't."

"Why? Why?"

There was a longer pause yet. "You 're just a little girl — a child. It would be wicked to marry you."

"But why? Of course we must marry!" She had never asked herself whether he loved her, and she did not ask it now, taking it for granted.

"You 're a child," he repeated. "You 're as wild as the wind. When you came in — There 's all outdoors about you still — always. It would be —"

"Wait! — I know the reasons without your telling me."

"All the better then."

"Yes, all the better! — *I* 'll tell them to you. I 'd been running in the wind, and when I came in, my hair was dreadfully mussed and I looked wonderfully happy. Why yes! because, you see, I 'd finished the long, hard way I 'd set myself to go. O but it was long! Foolish me! And so when I came in, glad beyond belief just to see you — Oh! and you think if we were married — just because you 're lying here where I could come running back sure to find you, if I had to go away for a minute — Dear heart, what fun it will be just not to be starving for sight of you! . . . Oh, I know the silly reasons, you see — the silly reasons that are no reasons at all."

"You don't. But try for once — imagine — look! Tied to *this!* Married to *this!* You can't know what it means. No woman can, I reckon. But try just for once to imagine,— and then —"

"I 'll try," she interrupted. "Now look at *me.*"

He let her take his hands from his face, and as he looked, there flickered across it a dim reflection of

her own radiance. But for a second only. "I knew you could n't even imagine it," he said; and then, "You 're shivering. Shut the window."

She obeyed, not knowing what she did. And when she started to seat herself again on the edge of his couch, he forbade her; and there was a quiet in his voice, that, more than any vehemence, struck her numb with dismay. His hands clenched the laurel against his breast. His face was turned towards the wall so that she saw only his profile, which she watched as a whipped dog its master. She was frightened chiefly perhaps because she was so puzzled.

"I 've been all to blame," he said slowly. "I thought I was strong enough, but . . . But it 's not too late. If you 'd been older, it might have been different — everything different, perhaps. But now, — there 's nothing for it but to keep out of each other's way. Don't you see?"

"No."

"Not see each other, I mean. You — must n't come any more, I mean."

"Not see you any more! . . . But that sounds like nonsense. Julian! why Julian! — if you meant that —" She felt the blood leave her lips. "*Don't* you love me, then?"

No answer to that.

"You mean you *want* me — to go away?"

No answer to that either.

"A minute ago —" She bent over him again; and then, "Ah, foolish Julian! what have you been saying?"

He held her away, but the blue flame in his eyes burned the numbness out of her. "Yes," he said, "I love you. I love you. I did n't mean to say it ever, or show it. But — how could I help loving you! You came in at the door there — you! — one day when I was loneliest. If you knew how I was wanting just you! I could n't help it; of course I loved you. . . . And then . . ."

"Then?"

"Then you thought you loved me."

"I loved you first. That 's why I came."

He paid no heed to that. "But it 's because I love you — understand? — *because* I love you, I forbid you to love me — waste yourself — your beautiful youth — waste it on *this*. That would be too ironical. But it shan't happen. It 's not too late."

"But it is, it is! O how little you know me then, — you, my very self! The love for you is I myself. Can't you see I was made for that? If you forbade that, you 'd forbid me; but you can't do either. You can't, dear, though I almost wish you could if you 'd be happier so! But see,— why should you want to! I 've seen men's faces — hundreds now — but none like yours; and yet I look in hope through every crowd for a face that will just remind me of yours, I starve

for it so. When I saw you here my life began. I thought I knew the joy of life till I kissed your forehead that morning, but —"

"Stop, dear."

"How can you call such wealth a waste? Yet you 've said you loved me. . . . And you never meant to say it? That 's strange. But I knew already, of course!" She laughed happily once more. "What would *you* do then if I went away?"

"What I did before."

"Alone with your miserable life; yes, day after day in this room, all alone with hopelessness, without any Zandrie. Dear heart, what nonsense to talk — even to talk about what would kill the happiness of us two! — of what could n't be! — for I love you — O yes, I love you into safety!"

"To-day. You love me to-day,— I know it."

"Forever — beyond God's reach."

"For a few months. You 're very young, you see; and I was the first man you met. And you were sorry. I know what pity can do with people like you. . . . You 'll meet other men soon now, and then — then you 'll see I was right."

"Sorry, you say! Yes, for the beautiful body God somehow had the heart to hurt. Oh, if I could have known what was in his thought, I 'd have lived a nun to pray him from it! But *you* — pity *you?* — when you 're stronger than I and I lay my will at your feet? O Mother of God! is it pity makes me do that, you

say?" She was pleading for what she valued more than her life, and arguments crowded to her aid. If he would only meet her eyes, she thought, she could compel him to hear her logic; but his face was turned to the wall again. "There 's something you forget," she said.

"What?"

"That I saw you when I was a child,— before it happened,— when you were on horseback. Remember? And you laughed and called back to me and rode into the woods, and I jumped down from the wall to follow. How could I be sorry for you then? But I loved you then,— oh, from the second I heard your laugh. And you can laugh still; and when I come to stay —"

"You 're a child still," he interrupted.

"In some things, yes; but not in love. You should n't have looked at me so, that day I took you to the woods, if you wanted me to stay a child. It was you shut the door on my childhood. You did n't mean to, of course; but I 'm glad you did. I would n't go back to poor, barren childhood for the world — do you think so? After *this?* But you were my happiness even when I was a child. Just the touch of you hurt me with happiness even then, as it hurts now, somewhere inside of me — just the happiness when you touch me. . . . Oh, don't you love me at all so?"

He answered not at all, but a second later she was

kneeling beside him, laughing softly again, because — well, for several reasons that seemed good: for one, because the grip of his arms allowed her scarcely breath enough to laugh with; for another, because he was kissing her; for another, because she knew that he kissed her wholly against his own grim, absurd will. "Think," she said, when she could speak at all, "— in all the ages we 've loved each other, think of the time wasted! Think what we 've got to make up!"

But before he could say what he might be thinking, some one knocked at the door.

"Wait!" he called. And then, "Forgive me," he whispered. "I meant it; but — To-morrow — come to-morrow. I can't say it to-day."

"To-morrow! I can come again to-morrow?"

"I can say it then. I 've got to have time, that 's all."

"Say it —?"

"Good-by,— yes. I meant it — what I said. I meant it." And because of the break in his voice, and in spite of the delirious happiness of the past minute, in which he had seemed to come to his senses too utterly ever to relapse, she knew that he meant it — to put her away from him. But she was still too happy to be wholly afraid.

"It 's Carter at the door," he said. "You must go."

"Till to-morrow," she whispered. "When I kiss

you to-morrow . . . you 'll see aright. You 'll love me, to-morrow."

"I 'll love you to-morrow, too. Yes. . . . Go now. Go quick!"

"To-morrow you 'll see aright," she repeated, her hand at the door-knob.

But his arm was crooked over his eyes, and he made no answer.

CHAPTER XIX

SHOWING WHICH HAD THE STRONGER WILL

In the morning Carter brought a note that bade her come at five. It said absolutely nothing but that and was signed "Yours, J. M. F.", and naturally set her asking why a man not frantically busy should write a note like a telegram to a body who knew he loved her because he had just told her so. Even though he intended to put a stop to it by sending her out of his sight, the love was meanwhile a fact recognized by both, about which neither was to be deceived by a game of pretending. It was the queerness of him that dismayed her; the incredible queerness that, in the first place, refused the gift of herself. But she would make him accept, of course. She had a will, too, that could make a brave stand against his, though it had not often conquered. Had it ever? She shied from that question.

The trouble seemed to be that he was fighting in the dark, with something she could not see. And if he saw it clearly himself, he would stop fighting. No doubt of that. So, that was all one needed to do,—to give him light, at whose coming the ghosts he

fought with must vanish. And have it he must; for, whether mistaken or not, so long as he fought at all, he was bound to have the better of her. For her will had never won yet. Facing the question at last, she answered truly, though making excuse for herself that he was older. But even while trying hardest to believe that desperation would lend her strength, or at least the wit, to make him see aright,— even while she vowed to herself not to leave him,— doubt of herself was gnawing at the root of her courage. The mere fact that she could not understand him, robbed what fighting spirit she might otherwise have had.

At four o'clock three young girls called on her,— "awfully nice girls," Mrs. Lynde said,— who went away agreeing that Zandrie was awfully queer. But then, she did stare perfectly frankly at the clock, thinking "why write a note like a telegram?" or, "what can one say to make the blind see?" instead of attending to what her callers were asking; so that her answers must have been a little wild.

At quarter to five she set out to him, clinging to a new determination to act the part of one who did not love him — absurd device to which she pinned the shreds of her hope. She would meet him on the ground that his note had appointed, and greet him as though yesterday had not been. She would seem to have forgotten.

But at the first sight of him, her forces fell into disorder, his own were plainly in such good array; her

wits reeled; and when he took her hand in silence, master of himself, she knew that he was master of her too. Yet there were shadows under his eyes that told of a grievous vigil.

"Sit down," he said, and she obeyed. He gripped the arms of his chair and looked away.

"You 'll see it as I do, some day," he said at last; and she caught her breath, knowing that it was coming now — what she dreaded most in all the world.

Had he expected an outbreak? — a passionate protest? He turned and searched her face.

"Go on," she said.

"What 's the use? You know already."

"Say it. You have n't said it yet."

"Yes, I 'll say it. You must n't come any more. We must say good-by. I 've known for weeks we 'd have to do it. We ought to have done it sooner. I ought, I mean. For it 's all my fault. It 's my fault that there came to be any need of — this. I had no business to love you. No right. It was incredibly weak of me to tell you. But now . . . You know it 's *because* I love you,— this?"

No answer.

"I reckon you don't understand it now, but you will some day. . . . Good-by," he said after another pause, holding out his hand.

Then Zandrie rose as in a dream, and took it. Both their hands were cold.

"You don't understand," he said.

"Good-by," was all that she answered. She began to walk towards the door. For it was a dream, of course; that was why she was yielding without even a struggle. It was unthinkable — it could n't be, that he was sending her — sending Zandrie — away from him forever, to a misery, therefore, that one could neither name nor imagine; that he meant that they should not see each other again. If that were his thought — if it could be true — then all the world was mad. She stopped at the door, turned slowly, and looked at him.

"Zandrie!" he pleaded, "come back, just for a moment — just till you understand. Say at least you believe I love you."

"I don't believe it," she said in a voice that seemed to come from somewhere outside of her.

"Then — I'm sorry," he answered. "And yet, it's as well perhaps, after all. I had no right to call you back. You were right in going. You're stronger than —"

"Strong? O no; nor merciless either. I don't *believe* — that 's all." And she shut her eyes, groping for the door-knob. "Why, if it were true, what you 've been saying — if this were real, what — what would become of us?"

The question seemed unanswerable, but he was ready. "Some day you 'll find another man — who can make you happy; whom you 'll — whom you 'll love better than you could ever have cared for me.

Who can give you the sort of life you ought to have, and — and all that."

Would the dream never end? She must wake soon, or die of the misery of it. Yet even tears refused their witness to reality. Then as she stood clinging to the door to keep from swaying, the idea came, that if this was indeed a dream, she could do what she chose. She shook her head as though to free it from a cobweb. "I 'll kiss you good-by."

What was it broke the spell? — the light that leaped to his eyes? or the vibrant voice that bade her come? At that, she ran to him and fell on her knees, to snatch his hands in both hers and hide her face against them. "Now I 'm safe," she sobbed. "I have him! I touch him! O Virgin, I 'll hold him tight!"

When the paroxysm of her sobbing was spent, he bade her look up; but she only sighed and knelt quiet, listening for his voice again. It came after another long silence. "Look up, beloved." And she raised her head in ecstacy.

"You believe I love you?" he asked.

"O yes, yes!"

"Then help me."

"That again? Just as we were beginning to be happy? Dear heart, let 's be happy just this one hour."

"You 're going to be happy always, if I can work it. . . . I had time to find out what happiness means.

Mere freedom 's happiness, and it 's enough that one of us lost that, is n't it? Your life is n't going to be spoiled too,— by mine. Perhaps you do love me now as well as a child can; I reckon you really do. But it 's because you 're a child, don't you see, that you can go and forget — these weeks. You must, and you can. Heaven knows, the idea of my marrying any woman — I buried that seven years ago — forever, so I thought. But you — to marry *you* —" His voice broke on that word and she leaped into the breach.

" But I — yes, that 's another story; for I was sent, you see, just to give back what you thought was buried — yes, and to find it myself — the first joy in all my life. And —"

He covered her lips with his hand, and she quivered under the touch, forgetting to finish. " What you were sent to me for," he said, " I can't answer much better than you,— nor how you could possibly come to think you loved me. But I 'm right sure of this, that it 's not too late. Wait! — I say it 's not. Maybe it 'll be hard at first for you as well as me; but only a little while,— and you 'll not be a coward. You 'll be splendid and strong for the little time you 've any need of courage. You see, you were made for so much bigger happiness than I could ever give. And the day will come when I 'll hear of it, and be glad, and you 'll justify me then."

She shook her head. " For one little moment it

seemed as if, just for the joy of doing your will, I could even go. But I can't. But I can't. All the world with you not there, would be a frightful, barren place in which I 'd die. I 'd be wicked without you. I 'd be afraid without you. I 'd come back."

"Not if I forbade —"

"Yes, I know it! I know! I understand nothing else in all the world but that I need you. I must keep you. I must make you see. You 're looking through some awful, twisted glass. Julian!" and her voice shot up to a higher note, "it 's for my life! O see aright!" She caught his hands again and laid her head on his breast. And at that, victory turned to look at her, as she had looked for a few delirious minutes, the day before. For Julian's answer was a sharp intake of breath, and he turned his face aside, and she felt him tremble. Yet when she looked up at last and read the resolve in his eyes — resolve such as a man grips as he would hold the blade of a sword, with a will only just stronger than the pain that the grip costs him — then fear beat out the last of her fighting strength, and "Oh, you 're strange!" she whispered.

"Do you think it 's easy? For heaven's sake, go now, *now!* If you love me, you can prove it so. And if you — if you come back,"— his voice was steady now —"you won't come back; I have faith in you,— but if you should, even once, I 'd go away my-

self,— out of town somewhere, where you could n't find me."

She believed that he would keep his word, and bowed her head till her forehead touched her knees.

When she rose at last, "And you say I must forget it all," she murmured, "forget your face,— every line of it? and the smile of your eyes, and your voice, and the touch of your hands? . . . Queer, how you can hate me so. You were kind when I was a child. God was cruel to let me see you; he must have known what you really were. . . . Why do you look at me so? I 'm glad, glad!" and her voice rose to a cry. "If I 've hurt you, I 'm glad! I 'll remember at least that you can suffer too. If I 've hurt you, perhaps there 's a God in heaven. . . . O what am I doing! This is n't Zandrie. See, I 'm calm now, and strong too, as you said. I can say good-by. I 'm not a child. You were wrong to call me a child." Her hand crept out to his hair. "Look up, then. Can't you say good-by, like me?"

"Good-by," he said in a voice that held nothing of the Julian she had known. But after that, he looked up, and his eyes held her so that it was not till after he had bowed his head again that she could stir.

She groped her way to the door.

Outside the house, on the front steps, she sank down, leaning her head against a post of the little porch till a woman who passed turned to look at her.

Then Zandrie pulled herself to her feet and walked away.

To the woods! To the woods! — to creep, like a hurt animal, under some friendly bush, close to the fragrant moss that hides one's tears without a question; to the woods, where the rocks are all but done with the toil of change, and growing things are at peace because their toil is obedience to a law that is all their desire and all their knowledge.

And when she stood on her hill at last, she looked up into its pines, pleading mutely for comfort — for belief, at least, and so for tears; for if she could believe in the cause of her woe, she could also weep, and the tears would loosen from her throat the grip of an anguish that was throttling her with cold, ever tightening fingers. But for that numbing of all sense of reality, she must have sobbed as she passed through the town. She had run past the Lawson farm lest the call of her name in some familiar little voice should prick the bubble of disbelief. But safe in the woods, she prayed for belief and tears. And it came, when her hand brushed across a mass of cool, sticky blossoms, and she saw the laurels beside and all about her; and "Julian! Julian! Julian!" she sobbed.

CHAPTER XX

THE TWINS

Whether or not Julian was right in calling her a child, she was past the age of despair that beats about in the dark till it stumbles by chance against a door, and the door bursts open to the light, and the dark is at once forgotten. Though she tossed at first on a sea of grief, blown this way by doubt of Julian's love, that by bewilderment, there began soon to stream across the waters a little light, very small at first and far away, then nearer and steadily clearer till she saw its very form. And having seen, she went to her hill and wrote a letter.

"JULIAN!

"Has n't God taught you better yet? Can you still think my life would be spoiled by our friendship?— that it would be less well with me if I had your brave self to run to for help? Why Julian, I've done nothing good these eight days, but only wondered how you could be so good and yet so blind. I've wondered till my poor brain has cried for mercy. And the very afternoon I left you I came to the woods till evening, so that the Lyndes asked questions, and I said I had been to the farm. And on Sunday I left the house pretending to go to you as usual, and lied again. I

never lied so badly before. But I knew I 'd be wicked without you. You see what I do. I want you so that I think I could do almost any bad thing to get you back. The Lyndes are dear and kind, but I can't tell them my trouble. It was hard for me to speak of you even when I was a child. Does that seem queer? It does n't to me any more. It seems as though I were beginning to understand all of life except you who are my own life. But if I could speak of you, who have now become my grief, what use would it be? They have each other, you see; they 've never been lonely; they are n't like me but like children, they are so happy. Let me come back and I 'll promise faithfully never to do a thing you forbid. I 'll try, if you say I must, not even to love you. Julian, have *you* ever needed help? If so, then let me come and help me, for I need you and you 're stronger than

ZANDRIE."

There could be but one answer to that, she believed; and she sang all the way back to town. Life was a wonder still!

The Lyndes had company at dinner that evening, in whose honor the table was set in the garden under an arbor of honeysuckle and red roses, and everyone was merry, but Zandrie most of all. The guests were Messrs. Marshall and Lee Wyndam. It was what she had dreaded and prayed for throughout the week, this coming of the twins, whom Mrs. Lynde had been expecting for the two weeks' visit that they usually made her at the beginning of their summer vacation. This summer, however, Julian had suddenly decreed that they were to spend those two weeks with him at

Mrs. Bright's; for one of her rooms was vacant now, he wrote, and Mrs. Lynde had a guest already; the matter was settled. And it appeared to be settled, though Mrs. Lynde protested that she and Poggy were much too fond of the boys to give them up, and that there was no earthly reason why they should, as the house was large enough to hold two more guests besides Zandrie. She even went to argue with him in person. But he was firm; "obstinate," she reported; "absolutely mulish, in fact, and absurd. His refusal was a whim." Even her attempt at a compromise failed, and he would not hear of their visiting her for a day,— for more, in fact, than dinner. "Try *your* arts," she said on that Sunday when Zandrie set out as though for her usual visit; and when she returned, had she prevailed? Mrs. Lynde asked. No? Then she had at least found out why he refused? Could she guess why? But deceitful Zandrie shook her head, knowing of course that he must be trying, by keeping the boys away, to lift a stone out of her Road to Forgetting; that she herself was the heart of his "whim." In a few days, though, after reading her letter, he would no longer see need of keeping reminders of himself out of her way. He could n't deliberately let her be wicked without him. He would call her back and let the twins stay with the Lyndes forever, if they wanted.

Any one seeing Zandrie dress for that little dinner might have been excused for labeling her vain, since

it is a fact that she chose her gown only after a vast amount of advice from her mirror. And there was room for choice too, as Mrs. Lynde had been buying pretty clothes for her with the same sort of delight that she once took in dressing her dolls, and Zandrie accepted them all with unprotesting glee. Her final choice to-night was a dress that had the deepest pink in its little roses, because she rather thought boys liked color, and it was important for reasons of her own that these particular boys should like everything about her.

They were good looking youngsters of thirteen, not enough alike to make trouble for their relatives or even their friends. Lee was her favorite even before he had said a word — just because he *was,* she said,— and in spite of Marshall's having lighter hair.

Marshall was spokesman at first, acknowledged by his brother's respectful eyes as the man of savoir faire; though it was Lee who started the talk after they sat down at dinner with "Gee, but this is nicer than Mrs. Bright's mess-room, is n't it!"— Marshall's only answer being a reminder under the table, where he kicked Zandrie's foot instead, that "gee" was not for ladies' ears.

"Do you know Cousin Ju, Miss Donallon?"— the man of the world turned to include her tactfully at last in a conversation hitherto of matters alien to feminine experience.

But she was finely prepared. "Know him? Has n't he mentioned me then?"

"No. At least . . . But you see we have n't been there long enough. Only came day before yesterday."

"Would n't you have found a chance to speak of me in two whole days?"

"I dunno. I 'd have *thought* of you, maybe!"

Lee grinned his appreciation of this gallantry.

"You rascal! . . . But I like you better than — Cousin Ju you call him? — who has n't even thought of me, you see. He thinks about music, and his miserable work, or what his wards are doing at baseball. Lee 's pitcher, he said. And you think I don't understand because I 'm just out of a convent? Well, I don't! But that 's the sort of thing he thinks about. He does n't like girls."

"Oh, oh!" Mrs. Lynde laughed wickedly.

"Don't blame him," said Lee.

His tactful brother glowered at him. "But Cousin Ju 's really an awful good chap just the same. But it 's funny," and he turned to Mrs. Lynde. "He 's been awful funny, this trip. Always used to be interested in — why, all sorts of things, and we 'd tell him things like — you know, Lee — other night on the roof. And he 'd give us Hail Columbia of course, only you know he does n't mean it, and calls us double-eyed villains and then owns up he was n't any Sun-

day school kid himself — you bet your life! — and did lots worse things too, and is n't really ashamed of 'em either. But this trip — we don't know what 's up, but he 's kind of cross and acts kind of sick, only he really is n't . . ."

Perhaps he really was, Mrs. Lynde suggested.

"No he is n't. Carter 'd be fussing over him like an old hen, if he was. Makes Cousin Ju just swearing mad if there 's anything really the matter — old Carter does — he 's such an old tabby about him. But now he 's just all-fired queer, that 's all. Does n't listen to a word we say."

"And has n't anything special he wants to say himself either." Even Lee was warming to the subject.

"Acts as if it was too much trouble to take the pipe out of his mouth."

"Gee, I 'd like to smoke like that!"

"And did n't get mad over something we — we were pretty nearly afraid to tell! Did n't see anything funny either. Just sat like a parson staring out the window — at the sunset," his ward added in wholesome contempt.

Zandrie laughed and laughed again.

"Did you notice ominous symptoms on Sunday?" Mrs. Lynde asked her.

She bent her head. "I remember . . . a quirk in the parting of his hair, which might mean . . . error in parting. Yet he 's good at parting. So the trouble must be with his eyes. But when I

told him that, he was very bearish and ordered me out of the room."

Poggy chuckled.

Lee asked if she went.

"What do you guess?"

"Bet you did n't," said Marshall.

"Bet she would have," said Lee, "if old Ju had meant it."

"Both wrong, and both right too! I went — after he 'd called the police."

An hour later she was strolling down the moonlit garden, two sturdy arms about her waist, and a yellow head below her left shoulder, and a brown one at precisely the same distance below her right; and she was listening with little squeals of glee to a tale of clandestine carousal with mince pie and some beer which, every one owned up afterwards to his bosom friend, tasted different somehow from what a fellow had a right to expect.

"Beer 's probably something you have to lie about like olives," Marsh concluded. "Bet it was the old beer stuff gave us that nightmare."

The loyal twins insisted that they shared their nightmares.

And then from tales of lurid wickedness and its too just punishment, they plunged into details of vacation campaigns. What time they were not learning to sail, this summer, they were going to live on horseback. Their grandmother Wyndam, whom they vis-

ited every summer, had a cottage on the Maine coast, and they were to have a knock-about of their own on their fifteenth birthday, provided, at least, that they pulled through the intervening years of probation, their guardian having promised it only on condition that they passed three out of every five examinations. But meanwhile he had given them unconditionally a saddle each.

"We 've always been riders in our family," Lee said superbly. "Mother rode like a bird, and Aunt Marjorie — she broke in one of her own ponies, and Gran'pa Marshall — jiminy Christmas, but he was a *dead game sport!* Owned seven blue-ribbon horses. And Cousin Ju — he had two or three himself, but Toper was his favorite all right. Too bad he got killed. He won steeple chases on Toper. And once he did n't ride in the gentlemen's running races but in the general, so he was really a professional jockey in a way, you know. He 's a dead game sport too, is n't he, Marsh?"

Marsh would back him up on that, even if the old sport *was* so weak on music. "Say, Miss Donallon, you were just jollying us back there, were n't you? You really like him, don't you?"

"Oh, at times . . . when he is n't sending for the police."

She danced away to pick three red roses frosted with dew — no, four; one for each twin and one for herself, and one that Lee could take, if he did n't mind,

to the Old Sport. "Hold it," she said, "while I fix yours in your buttonhole. And you 'd better be quick when I 'm done, or — guess what! . . . Only I would n't really — never fear — for I know all about how boys hate kissing."

The twins looked at each other out of the corners of their eyes and said nothing at that moment. But she overheard something later as they hunted for their caps in the arbor. "Gee!"— it was Lee's whisper, she thought —"this honeysuckle stuff smells kind of nice. . . . Say, d' you know, I almost wish we 'd . . . let her!"

"Huh!" was the answer, "if you 're going to get soft — But she 's a dead game sport all right. . . . And say! — she is sort of — well, sort of pretty, is n't she."

And the one who overheard laughed softly for delight.

CHAPTER XXI

ZANDRIE MAKES A PROMISE

But because she was only seventeen after all, Julian's answer to her letter looked as inexorable as the arm that closed the Garden of Eden, and standing outside the gates of her own Eden, she saw the road before her stretch away to unending desolation, a thirsty horror fading only into the gray immensity of time. But the figure of the Garden did not fit her case after all, she said, for she must travel the road alone.

For three days after the coming of his letter she made a valiant struggle to do what it asked of her and to be brave; and she succeeded so well at least that the Lyndes noticed nothing amiss with her. She laughed with them, telling stories of the convent, and even spent a whole afternoon at the farm, teaching Flotilla the uses of magic beans. She had forced herself to read, and to understand what she read too, though that often involved reading a passage four times over before its meaning cooled into shape in her hot brain. She thought she was doing very well. And at night — well, at night she had cried a good

deal, to be sure, but she had also prayed hard to the Virgin for courage equal to Julian's.

On the fourth night, however, something like a little demon hopped into her brain to touch off a rocket question beginning with the old Satanic "why?" Why choose, if God — or Julian — invited her to an unequal contest in which the joy of living must go down — why choose to accept the challenge? Why? — when life without Julian was simply a contradiction of terms, and to ask it was inviting her to eat without food?

Why had he demanded it? Her thought had beaten itself against that incomprehensibility till her very body was sore. And his letter, for all its pains to explain, still left her beating against the wall; the reasons were no reasons. He was out of his mind. Or else — or else he did not really love her.

Earth throbbed with the myriad voices of the July night — a chorus of tiny praises for the fiery day that was done; the sky throbbed with the mystery of its unheard music — depth upon depth of stars, and still unfathomed depths, every area luminous with the hint of unseen treasure. And from all that ocean, never a drop of peace for a parched little soul? She lay stifled by infinity, an atom caught in the whirlpool of being, an absurd speck that God had probably forgotten and that might choose either good or evil without disturbing by a hair's breadth the movement of his

august machinery. Julian was right in that she had known nothing of the world. She had seen neither its complexity nor its vastness. She had believed herself an item that counted in its economy. Her once dreamed-of work in the world? O pitiful, sublime conceit! The idea that Julian had need of her — he himself had proved rather well the absurdity of that. She was not needed even by the two good souls who had asked her to live with them until she should find her work. And she was never to find it, because it did not exist.

Then why be "brave," when bravery meant merely a journey of lonely terror down the road that Julian had the arrogance to tell her must be her way? "Must?" In heaven's name, why? Why not defy his "must," and God himself? Why not slip of her own will out of all known enigmas? — take the unknown for better or for worse? That would hardly be cowardice. But perhaps all good believers were wrong and Dr. Summers was right, and there was neither heaven nor hell, but a friendly void, the end of pain and bliss. Then she could at least obey Julian and forget!

She sat up slowly, more like a child that knows itself naughty, than like one who has gripped a great resolve, and felt for Julian's letter under her pillow. It must not be left behind for other eyes. She would have liked to carry it bodily with her into the next world; and meanwhile it possessed her thought so

that she forgot to plan how she would enter that world herself. Her resolve to die was as undefined as great.

For several minutes she fingered its sheets, caressing, folding them, and again unfolding, summoning in vain the will to tear them. She had rather tear her own flesh, almost, than the writing there. It was almost all that she owned of Julian now. Well then, she would compromise with her stubborn hands, and read once more, though she knew it all by heart already. So she felt stealthily for a match, and, startled to breathlessness by its hiss, lit a candle. The sight of Julian's hand-writing brought him so vividly near that her hands dropped to her lap, and "O Mother of God!" she whispered, "how could you let him!"

When she took up the letter again, her glance fell on some words near the end: "Then why not live near each other in simple friendship? you ask. I've asked it myself often enough, but the answer always comes out the same: because I could n't do my part; because I 'd go on loving you and showing it too, for I 'm mighty poor at acting. You love me now as well as you can now, but I reckon that 's because you were made for loving and the first man you met loved you. The sight of my love would bind you in yours, just because you 're you. If I could give you anything like the life you ought to have, perhaps I 'd have the right to try to keep your love, though I 'm wholly un-

worthy of you and have been even more so in the past. You 've seen the best of me, and hardly anything but the best, you know. You don't know what a villainous temper I 've got, or how often it gets me. Carter could tell you a thing or two. But even with a nice disposition, no old thing with a crack in his spine would have a right to you. Honor alone would require me to leave you free — to give you your chance, that is, for the best sort of life and the fullest happiness. And when you are all grown up, dear, it will come, and you 'll justify me."

O yes, she knew all that by heart; and the thought was already old, that if his love were as deep as hers, it would teach him better wisdom.

She turned listlessly back to the first sheet. "Dear heart," it began — and she could tell what followed with her eyes shut — "I wish more than ever before that I could play to you, for then perhaps I could make you see."

Make her see! — when, if she was blind, he was both blind and deaf!

Glancing up, she caught sight of her face in a mirror, and started at recognizing it as her own — the eyes shadowed beneath in the flickering candlelight, the lips set in lines of bitter grief. No one who saw those would call her a child! Julian's eyes were shadowed like that when she last saw them — yet brave too; yes, cruelly brave like the letter here. As soon pity the archangel Michael in his arrogant pride

of strength, as the man who could write this. She turned the sheets over mechanically, reading without heeding.

Wait! — what was it he said here? She read again: "Have I ever needed help? Dear, can you ask it in earnest? I know you 've called me brave and thought me strong, but surely not quite as strong as that? It 's true I used to like danger and don't fear death, but what do you think of a fellow who often fears living, because of the humiliation of having to live in a wheel-chair or be carried about like a baby, and flies into rages because he can't have his own way? That fear of living has almost got the best of me at times, and the resolve to live and fight it out to the end has come out on top chiefly because — well, I reckon because it was too indecent cowardice to do anything else."

"To live and fight it out" — had she seen those words before? Why, those meant — yes, they must mean that he had thought of — of what she had decided this very night to do presently. If they had not appeared on the paper, as the writing on the wall, she had read them over and over without heeding. And she had thought she knew the letter by heart! "The resolve to live" . . . Ah, one suffers very much before one comes to the need of that resolve. And then, unforeseen, some words of her own stormed her memory, swarming through her brain till it rang and echoed with the odd clamor — very odd indeed for

the reason that though the voice seemed to come from without, it was her own. "Why do you look at me so? I 'm glad! glad! I 'll remember at least that you can suffer too."

She threw herself back on the bed and stopped her ears, to banish the ghost of her own voice.

It must have taken a long time, for when she opened her eyes, the candle flame was struggling like a poor lost soul in a slough of its own making. She watched it with half-seeing eyes, searching her tired brain for what had happened; but all that she found was the memory of a frightening, shapeless something like a tidal wave, that for a moment had caught consciousness itself in its undertow; and then the smaller return waves had come eddying back, till the waters of the spirit were ready to take up their old, sane beat. She sighed and sighed again, but happily, because of a danger past. The only pain left was the pain of self-forgetting love.

The Knight on his horse rode once more before her vision, confident, splendid,— embodiment of the joy of living, mere sight of whom set the blood athrob. When a child, she herself had ridden a pony and heard a whistle of wind at her ears and felt the quivering warmth of horse-flesh between her knees; she herself knew how, at a gallop, one rides not a horse but the rhythm of a song. One must ride to know the alphabet of the fun of life.

But to learn and lose it! Better, almost, not to

have known, if the fun must go. And when it must be exchanged for unending dreariness; when, instead of free to come and go in the sunshine, a man lies chained to pain and the ignominy of bodily helplessness, unable to cross a room without aid from those whom he could once have carried on his back almost without bending — a man still young, to the core of him abominating dependence — She had known the bitterness of deprivation in Julian's lot already — the obvious tragedy of unfulfillment, thwarted desires, and present pain. But the worst of it, the gall of its gall — its humiliation — she had not tasted with him till to-night. Remember that he could suffer? Her bitter words were turned prophets of salvation, for with them the full meaning of his renunciation of herself burst upon her, dragging shame at its heels — shame to think how nearly the sacrifice had been for nothing. If he had put her from him, deeming her worth the struggle it cost, and then if she had proved herself a contemptible thing! He had given her up because he loved her as though she were worthy — worthy of the love of one who could lose point by point in the game of life and refuse to stop playing, even after he had turned from the last bright chance, because it was not quite fair — so he thought — yet the last, perhaps, in all the game. If he had been brought to more chagrin through her — O Mother of Heaven! that would have been too pitiful, if she had done what she had planned to do this night — the thing that he

himself had scorned! — if he had learned that the great act of his life had been squandered on something meagre, paltry! . . . However mistaken, the act of his sacrifice was still sublime.

And so she came to make that promise which made life without Julian a possible thing because Julian was yet the heart of its motive; for it was the promise to justify his sacrifice by living as greatly as she could. She would live just for that. And later, "I 'll try to forget too," she said. "I 'll have to forget, or — Virgin help me to forget! . . . But I promise. I promise."

CHAPTER XXII

THE ROAD

It seems a curious paradox that the road to the Hill of Forgetting is stony unless one climbs it blindfolded. But when Zandrie chose that road, in the first flare of resolve the sorry business of remembering to forget looked almost possible.

Early in July, two days before the expected migration to her summer cottage, Mrs. Lynde fell ill, and though her sickness made a strong ally in the fight to forget, every day in town was beset with ambuscades of reminder — grievous enough in a time when it was a feat of will, for instance, just not to walk past Mrs. Bright's on purpose. That temptation snared her only once however, and brought little comfort too, for once in sight of Julian's window — that western window from which one saw a piece of the street — she had hung her head in shame and fear of seeing what she most ached to see in all the world, and so walked straight into an apologetic mountain that turned out to be Carter, from whom she had scurried away without a word. Often since, she had called herself faint-spirited little fool for not having asked a

single question; but those were not her best moments, she owned.

Of course her hill was hedged with danger; and there was Billy at the farm, but she could go to play with the other children when he was at the printing house. His mother's questions were easily answered and soon ceased after her explaining that since she lived with the Lyndes she saw little of Billy's Mr. Furness.

But the Lyndes' questions were to be feared in earnest by one so bent on the business of forgetting, though the time was bound to come when they would discover what she had so far been at such pains to hide — the fact that she no longer went to see Julian.

It was in these first days of battle with the past that she asked them to call her Alex, instead of Zandrie which was so knit with memories of the unhappiest years of her life — though "of the happiest weeks" would have hit nearer the truth; but, she wanted to start anew, she said.

Poggy, when his wife fell ill, was for having a trained nurse, which Zandrie would not hear of, however, playing nurse herself with prodigious enthusiasm even after her patient teased her with the charge that she might have made a perfectly good sister of charity after all. For of course, acute though she often was, Mrs. Lynde could hardly be expected to see, below such zeal, the passionate motive of resolve to justify

another's self-sacrifice. She ascribed it to "natural intensity "— and was partially right.

On the second Sunday of her illness she asked why Zandrie was not going to see Julian, and as Poggy was within call and beautifully eager to be of service, the poor child left the house at once to avoid more questions. But messages flew after her on her way down stairs: "Tell him we 'll be at the cottage by August first and want him as soon as he can come. Tell him you 're the best inducement we offer this season. Tell him —"— but Zandrie was speeding away in a panic. When she returned however — from the Lawson farm — Mrs. Lynde had a headache and asked no questions, and whenever she spoke of him during that week, Zandrie managed to change the subject and tell no lies. But that he would not come to the Lyndes' cottage was quite certain of course, and their discovery that his reason concerned herself, seemed bound to come.

And it did come, one evening ten days later. Mrs. Lynde sat on the veranda, the household cat on her lap, Zandrie perched on the railing, while Poggy in earnest communion with his pipe paced a garden walk. "You think you see him?" his wife suggested. "O dear, no! Poggy 's in his unsavory laboratory — where things are exploding prematurely a little too often lately, I take it. It 's disturbing his mind — even his! I know the signs." And after a pause, "I sent him after you to Julian's, last Sunday."

The railing gave such a lurch for Zandrie that she clutched at the vine behind her. One of Mrs. Lynde's friends had called, last Sunday, so that she had escaped from the house even without messages.

"And his report," her hostess went on, "roused my unusually feminine curiosity to such a pitch that —"

"Here he comes!" Zandrie gasped.

"Julian? . . . Oh, our Poggy's wraith."

The wraith stumbled substantially against the steps and murmured "gosh!"

"Poggy dear!" his wife reproved. "Before the cat too!"

But he wheeled about unheeding; and Zandrie hunted in vain for something to divert Mrs. Lynde from the question she had almost asked.

"He went to Julian's," the ruthless lady said, "hoping to walk home with you, and waited till six. I berated you both,— separately,— for being late — but Poggy of course did n't explain for three days."

Zandrie remembered his inquiring glance when she had come in late to dinner, but as he had said nothing of where he had been, and his wife was still in her room, her guilt had escaped Mrs. Lynde's detection. She murmured now something about the Lawson farm.

"But what puzzled him to the verge of gossiping was Julian's behavior at mention of yourself. He changed the subject, and asked after my health as

though challenging poor dear Poggy to a duel. And then it came out that he did n't know I was sick, and when Poggy seemed grieved that you had n't spoken of it, he got red and incoherent in your defense; from which Poggy made out only that you had n't been there for ages and were n't expected that afternoon. But of *course* he never asked why. And next, it came out that Julian refused point-blank and without any given reason, to come to the cottage as usual. Of course he 's often disagreeable — all musicians are — but dear me! no one need growl at inoffensive Poggies!"

Zandrie found nothing to say to the contrary.

"Now then, I 'm going to brave Julian myself, presently. Meanwhile — O Zand— — I mean Alex! You intangible little creature! Who knows? you may tire of us, presently; and Poggy 'll wake up and ask after you, and I 'll have to tell him 'She 's been gone for days and days!' Tell me, do you feel it coming on — the impulse to flight?"

Zandrie jumped down from her perch, but her hostess caught her hand. "Not yet, dear! . . . Will you go with me to see poor old Julian to-morrow or next day? I 'll be able to race an auto by next day! . . . O my dear, I understand. I don't ask you to explain; it would n't be of any *use* to ask, I 'm afraid." There was a little something like bitterness in her voice, as she said that. "Why don't you tell things and let your friends help?"

She stood silent for a minute. "Yes," she said at last, "you can help, then — by — by not speaking — never speaking of him again. Think I 'm tired of him, if you choose, but —"

"I never thought it for a minute!"

"But don't ask me to go with you. I 'm not going to see him any more. And — and when you see him," she went on very quietly — it was wonderful, how quiet one could be! —"please don't speak of me."

"But when he speaks of you?"

"He won't; not even if you speak of me."

"Bless us! It sounds like a dime novel! I 'll have to padlock my tongue and let him do all the talking; and he won't do it! He never did confide in me. So we 'll just sit glaring at each other and — Well, dear, don't take things too intensely. I understand these little matters better than you think. You 're bound to make it up soon, you two."

So she thought they had quarreled! Distasteful interpretation though it was, Zandrie let her keep it. And yet, if Mrs. Lynde had been ever so little different — less like a child, for instance . . . The impulse to tell her all was often urgent; it was so compelling even at this moment that Zandrie suddenly took Mrs. Lynde's face between her hands and turned it to the moonlight. Then her hands dropped, and she went into the house.

A few days later Mrs. Lynde made her call on

Julian, but found him "even gruffer than usual." His reason for refusing to come to the cottage now appeared to be, that he was going to a camp in Vermont with his friend the organist of the Catholic church; Carter too, of course. If she had hoped for light on the subject of his breach with Zandrie, he had evidently disappointed her. He acted as though he *needed* a vacation, she said, and she was glad enough when the ringing of the fire bell gave her an excuse for cutting her call short. She always ran to fires. "'It's all very well to dissemble your love, but why should you kick me down stairs?'" she sang; and when Poggy asked who wrote that vulgar ditty, "Charles Wesley?" she mused sweetly, "or was it Mrs. Hemans?" But for all her shocking levity she showed excellent self control about asking questions, and if she made further efforts to understand the breach she supposed to exist, she said nothing about them to Zandrie.

The cottage was her own property,— a charming little house on the coast of southern Maine, in a colony of "the sort of people she was used to." She always wanted to marry a business man, she said, but to live in a manufacturing town the year round was another matter; as she could n't afford an auto, she liked to play with people who talked of something besides motoring and shop. In fact she really had to come down here to save her clothes and her soul. The only lack was poor dear Poggy. It would be so perfect if

only he could be here more. In which he agreed with her, perhaps. But he came every Saturday evening, tired out, and had to return to his laboratory, tired still, Monday morning, his wife keeping open house joyously the while. There was something a little pathetic in the droop of his shoulders as he sat among her guests, smiling vaguely at the laughter when by chance it reached him through the wall of his preoccupation, so that once Zandrie led him forth for a walk along the rocks; and then he broke his silence to discourse of the dull habits of the pentacta frondosa, and lost track of the time, and was altogether happy till he got back and was reproved for being late to lunch and for having deserted his wife. He sighed, said nothing, and took no more walks without her, which amounted to his taking no more at all.

Zandrie spent her first days at the shore exploring the wonder-houses of barnacles, snails and starfish, all in a fury of resolve not to remember that someone had been here before her and would be here now but for herself. There was a flat ledge where one could lie in the sun, out of sight of houses, and watch the swells heave up out of the south-east, listening for the organ tone deep and steady under the shifting hiss of the spray. Had it ever brought him, too, thoughts that must be beaten back? She dared not listen long because of them; for she was being marvelously good about keeping her promise. Indeed she thought she had come a long way on her road.

One afternoon her friend Mrs. Lynde set a good-sized boulder in the way, apparently with intention, though it may be that she had really forgotten the plea for help. She never dreamed, she said, that Julian could flirt — not till two or three years ago here at the shore. "She was a fascinating girl — lots of attention from men — so much that I warned her to be good when she came here." She laughed, and Zandrie affected interest in a perfectly parvenu muscle-shell at her feet. As a matter of fact she was unreasoningly, guiltily glad of a new stone in the road, and in fear of its being removed all too soon. But Mrs. Lynde had more to say. "I wrote her there was an invalid gentleman here whose life she really must n't ruin . . . It was really funny . . . though he was good looking enough, if one admires fair men — he showed the marks of illness so much less than now; and she expected from my letter to find a middle-aged, dyspeptic horror. But as for his flirting — it never occurred to me that he could — or be dangerous if he did. Oh, it was nothing serious, of course; she married, the next year. But I was just surprised that it was she had the worst of the encounter — that 's all. And it was nothing but outrageous, arrant flirting on his part. He said so. Even said by way of self defense, though quite seriously too, that he *could n't do anything else!* — was n't in a position to. O these men! . . . But he 's right, of course, about not marrying. Perfectly. He 'd be difficult enough to

live with even under the most favoring circumstances — favoring to his temper, you know; but . . . Heaven send angel Poggies to all of us!"

Questions that Zandrie had no courage to ask, clamored in her; but Mrs. Lynde, conscious perhaps of a duty well done, changed the subject.

Result of the dutiful act: a night of new imaginings, memories, questioning, and incredulous indignation against Mrs. Lynde's unsympathetic attitude towards Julian himself and the question of his marrying; all to the accompaniment of a wet pillow.

Then, luckily, the road began to be enlivened by certain travelers coming from worlds so different from the one she had known, that their words caught the ear of her interest at last. Mrs. Lynde's visitors, for a fact, were seldom dull. But the one who could hold attention best of them all, did not whirl in till one Saturday in October — to spend Sunday only, so he said. But he stayed a week. And in that week Dr. Francis Royce showed himself in a distracting variety of lights. Whatever was to be said for or against the color of his eyes, his faults did not include monotony. With Poggy he discussed heavy scientific questions. To Mrs. Lynde he displayed quasi-filial devotion spiced with gallantry; the two were never heard to exchange a serious thought. With Zandrie he was, by turns, brotherly, paternal, audacious, meek, masterful, elaborately formal, impertinent, and the pink of courtesy. A great help,— no doubt of that!

One ofternoon, seated on a ledge above a swirl of green water, she was startled to find him standing near, eyeing her with prodigious solemnity. "Now, at the end of the week, what do you really think of me?" he demanded. "I've come for a last *and candid* statement of your opinion."

At least he could make one laugh. But she had told him already that she liked him not at all. "You're going?" she said.

He looked at her quizzically. "Hard to read without a pony. . . . Yes, I'm going. My orgy of irresponsibility is ended."

One had to have thought of a thing before having an opinion, she said gravely.

"O never! — or seldom. But honestly, Miss Alex, — if I were n't artist enough to enjoy the dramatic for its own sake . . . Come, we 'll sacrifice art to truth at last. You've got an opinion — a very positive opinion. You and I are n't of the genus jelly-fish, you know. No one ever met me without feeling quite sure he 'd met *something.*"

"Something . . . Yes," she said, "I see it now! — a strange beast with scales that change color with every light, and tentacles all over that feel and feel for others' thoughts about itself. But they need n't feel on this rock! But there, there,— I 'll say good-by nicely. Some of its scales are very pretty. It 's a good beast, sometimes, when it talks science with Poggy."

"If you 'd *like* me to talk science with you — "

"Saints defend us! — only sense."

His smile was paternal. "And you looked so harmless — so artless — standing there in your little black dress, communing with the miniature that evening. So helpless . . . If that lady of the miniature had only been my mother, now, and I had favored her, as they say. . . . Jove! I met a fellow in Paris once, whom I 'm glad *you* have n't met."

"Why?"

"So like the lady. You evidently approved of her looks."

She ignored the implication. "Who was he?" she asked, her heart beating fast.

"Blessed if I remember his name. Noticeable, good-looking chap I heard play the organ, that was all. Did n't really know him, but I 've always envied him, somehow . . . Well, good-by. Good-by. But I 'm coming back in spite of you!" And although he strode away with a shake of his fist, the light in his eyes was neither fatherly nor fraternal. But she noticed it not at all. In fact, the startling idea that it was quite possibly Julian whom he had seen and heard — for he had been in Paris eight years ago — excluded all thought of the Doctor himself for the next two hours.

Yet his personality was not of the genus jellyfish. It was often distinctly irritating — the insolence with which his kaleidoscopic image careered through one's

brain, capering into the gravest assembly of thoughts without apology or "by your leave." Yes, Dr. Francis Royce compelled attention — of a sort, so she told herself that evening as she and Mrs. Lynde watched a phosphorescent pool — a firmanent of meteors and restless Milky Ways with comets of white flame at their core. He had watched it with her the evening before, talking "sense" for a full half hour. She owed him gratitude at the least for helping her on her road. And she had come such a long way now — three months along — and that was a whole quarter of a year. Three months with never a sight or sound of — hey! but this sort of thing was against rules! — she was paying the penalty of a sob already, and Mrs. Lynde not a foot away to hear it! She heard, of course, and natural results ensued: more sobs, mutual embraces, tender dabs of a handkerchief, words that look foolish in print,— all, in short, except an explanation.

Yet the impulse to tell came often still, and Mrs. Lynde wanted her confidence — showed that she was piqued and hurt by her withholding it. But Mrs. Lynde herself had destroyed the last possibility of her giving it, when she had said that Julian ought not to marry. For in the first place her evident personal dislike of the idea of his marrying seemed to imply a lack of thorough liking for Julian himself, and so to cut a gulf of incomprehensibility between herself and one who loved him. But above all, it meant that if she

knew what he had done, she would take his side. So the habit of keeping her own counsel, already learned in the convent, stood Zandrie in good stead now, she thought. It was becoming second nature.

Indeed it is a useful, commendable habit, they say.

CHAPTER XXIII

ZANDRIE OF THE WORLD

With the return to town in the fall, to be sure, there began a period of fierce, disheartening struggle, when she would wake from a dream of him in the night and smother wild sobs in a promise to go to him in the morning and defy him to hold her from him. But in the morning her courage would waver because of his threat to go where she could not find him, if she came back even once, and because she believed he would keep his word. And so, not to drive hope yet farther from her, she held back. Which shows that hope was actually living somewhere in the labyrinth of her thought — a pale, shy, shapeless little hope of some far-away, unimagined miracle that might strike the blindness from Julian's eyes and turn his will. Perhaps it was fear of banishing this hope, that held her back even when, desperate with the need of him, she had gone to Mrs. Bright's — even rang the doorbell — even stood at the door of his room, her hands over her mouth lest the agony of the strife should send forth a cry. Once she stood for an hour looking up at his window, regardless of passers. Under the pain of

such hours hope ran far away to hide, and desire to live worthily for Julian's sake turned apostate; anger against him, and the questions, even the temptation, of the night of her great promise came wriggling back.

Yet, month by month, the anguish of longing for his physical presence insensibly dwindled; the moments when it would swoop upon her unforeseen and tear at her till she cried for mercy had grown farther and farther apart, until at last, with the help of hope perhaps, she had gotten her grip again on the will to keep her promise — and to forget, because safety lay only in forgetting. And so one day, at the top of her new resolve, she turned to look at the world. And then, doubtless because her mind was starving, it fell upon food to gorge itself for a while. At any rate, spying the pantry of science through the crack of a door opened by Poggy, she was for rushing in one day to snatch the covers off all the jars at once. Whereupon, delighted Poggy gave her a popular book on chemistry — which she actually read almost half through — and some perfectly incomprehensible fireside lectures, supplemented, however, by one or two delightfully explosive object lessons in the Lynde Chemical Company's laboratories. It was very good on the whole — this chemistry jar — its fascinations enduring through three solid weeks. Then, orgies of star gazing in midwinter, till her friends predicted pneumonia and her hostess began to read poetry with her. Mrs. Lynde, in fact, was little likely ever to plunge into scientific

excesses herself. During those fireside lectures she had been shockingly flippant or frankly bored, or sometimes she watched Poggy with a little contraction of her lips. "I suppose he 'd have talked to *me* now and then," she said once, "if I 'd only conceived an affection for evil smells and things that explode prematurely." But although she said it with a laugh, Poggy looked puzzled and uneasy and Zandrie asked herself whether his wife could possibly be jealous.

Poetry was decidedly more diverting than the nebular hypothesis, but rather less safe. In fact, the only poetry that seemed "safe" at all, like "Paradise Lost," could hardly hold one's attention; while the poems that could — "Euridice to Orpheus" or the last pages of "Pompilia," for instance — were so horribly unsafe that she would have liked to learn them by heart. A distressing dilemma.

Early in the winter the Lyndes began to talk of adopting her, and, without taking any legal steps, they yet went so far as to call her "Alex Lynde"; which, more than anything else, helped to assure her that links with the past were breaking. The twins did not trouble her at all after Christmas, and not so very seriously even then, because of another guest at dinner with them. Mrs. Lynde seldom went to see Julian, and Poggy, if he went at all, never talked about it. So no wonder that by the end of June she could almost forget sometimes for hours together. Small wonder that at the end of twelve months without glimpse of him, it

had begun to seem as though he had really gone out of her life to stay, or that she sometimes dared look the thought in the face. Reason defied her not to. But beside reason stood a stupid doubt that could give no account of himself, yet refused to budge. "Julian's will has barred the door," said reason; "it will never be opened." To which, "Nonsense, nonsense," the stupid doubt would mumble. And so, dodging behind both was that little rascal of a hope whom, for the chases he led her, Zandrie hated and loved by turns.

But in proportion as Julian seemed to recede from her life, the kaleidoscopic doctor was entering. He was that other guest when the twins came to dinner, and horrid anxiety his watchful eyes gave her while the twins' talk was of their guardian — who was n't half as queer this time, they reported, as in the summer; but he was n't as much sport as he used to be, either, and scolded them in earnest for putting up money on the Yale-Harvard game. But never mind; he was a dandy old chap all right. His Puritanical weaknesses were probably due to advanced age. He was twenty-nine, for he said so! Mrs. Lynde explained to the Doctor that the patriarch was a family friend *like himself* — her dimple twinkled wickedly as she said that — but that he was an invalid and unable to dine out. Marshall told Zandrie that Cousin Ju thanked her for that rose,— did she remember? But being a man of tact, he delivered the message in the privacy of the coat closet. So Dr. Francis Royce

went away without discovering, through any detail of that evening at least, that Miss Alex Lynde had ever known a Mr. Furness.

Judging by the frequency with which his duties called him from Boston through this town an hour and a half distant, one must infer that Dr. Royce's practice was phenomenal. Even his flattering appointment as assistant to the great Dr. Ward, at his private hospital in Boston, could not prevent a weekly call on the Lyndes. Yet when he asked Zandrie to marry him, her dismay and surprise were equally real. "What! — live with you always, when we do n't even love each other!"

But we did, he insisted; so that she laughed and said that love put on a queer mask.

"You *will* love me," he said then; and to her "never," "Hey! what do you know about 'never' at your age?"

She reminded him that she would be nineteen in eight months; and he took his turn at laughing. "You bewitching parcel of wilfulness! — when will you marry me?"

"Please do n't talk about it."

"Talk? I 'll talk till you marry me, if it takes my last breath plus adminstrations of oxygen. I 'll propose once a day by mail and twice in person from now on, till you choose to formally accept me."

"O me!" she sighed.

"I 'm a man of my word — and rather clever too!

I knew how the siege would open. Ought to have chosen the army. I 'd have made a Napoleon. I 'd have diagnosed the enemy's case down to the smallest internal lesion. If you 'd accepted me to-night — Why, upon my word, Alex, I believe I 've *just begun* to love you!"

"You!" she said to that, "— *you* to talk of love! . . . Could you love a girl well enough to give her up?"

Yet, although she asked that very much in earnest, Dr. Royce said the question was absurd.

But sameness was not one of the Doctor's faults, and his next avowal was of quite terrific seriousness. He brought cannon to the siege. But the fort, after firing a few capricious shots, subsided into silence. When he declared eternal love, Zandrie smiled. At his charge of cruelty, she smiled still. When he lost patience, she skipped away to her room.

Next time it was she who lost patience. "You do n't know the A B C of love," she said. "You 'd hate me if I loved you. Oh, I only wish I c-could!" From which sublimely illogical height she slid into tears of pure vexation and escaped again to her room. But, as he rushed for his train, the doctor chanted a war-song. On the train he meditated strategy. Result,— not another proposal for two weeks.

Meanwhile the Lyndes had evidently enlisted under his flag, for Poggy himself began to alternate his expositions of the nebular hypothesis (what did n't

Poggy know!) with eulogiums of his brilliant young friend Royce — "capital fellow; good son of a good father; pretty sure to make his mark in the surgical field too; considered of uncommon promise by the great Ward"; et cetera; et cetera. He became positively garrulous — for Poggy. And his wife took Zandrie frankly to task. Any one could see that Dr. France loved her to distraction. In fact, he had told her — nice, frank man — that he loved her adopted niece with all his heart and was determined to win her. It was really a shame that her dear Alex, even if she could n't give him her love, treated his own so carelessly.

"That 's the way it deserves to be treated," Zandrie said, and laughed at the discourse that followed. Had Mrs. Lynde encouraged him? she asked at last.

O no! she had n't given him the least hope, she said; she had no right to. But neither had she the heart to discourage him.

"You want me to marry him!"

"N-o-o,— not unless you love him, that is. Heaven forbid! I only want you to be happy; and for you, you know — well, I think I know you well enough at least to see you 'll be happiest married,— married to the right man. I once thought — forgive my speaking of it — that you and Julian — I was afraid you and he were rather interested in each other, perhaps, before that misunderstanding? I don't know, of course. He never told me a bit more than you have.

But I could n't help feeling, just the same, that it was n't so unfortunate — that breach. For your sake, I mean. It would take patience enough to have any man in one's house *all day,* you know,— even a Poggy in perfect condition. And poor old Julian can be pretty terrible. Used to be, at any rate, when he lived with his aunt and hurled paperweights. That sort of thing may be picturesque, but it is n't cosy to live with. Really, not *nice.* And he had a splendidly straight aim. Not that he ever aimed at *her,* of course; but one of his men sued him for damages, actually! . . . O well, France Royce may not be *the one,* but he 's certainly a nice, jolly, peaceful, healthy — "

"I hate him!" Zandrie interrupted, with a stamp of her foot. "And you need n't talk about Julian, ever! And I have n't any heart anyhow! And oh!" she ended in tears, "it 's all so different from what I thought!" An ambiguous remark, without doubt.

But in her room she added — to herself — that she hated Mrs. Lynde; and then, that Mrs. Lynde certainly hated her.

Paradoxically enough, the first repulse that really disheartened her lover was when he first convinced her of his own ardor; when she cried with all her heart, and was sorry to have hurt him,— O yes! — but it could never, never be that she . . . There were reasons . . . Oh, not reasons! That is, she knew herself well enough to know that she could never

love him,— never! Though Heaven knew how she wished she could! Paradoxically, it was when she called him "France" for the first time, and gave him her hands of her own free will, to hold for almost half a minute. When she really almost liked him at last.

He walked away from the encounter so slowly that he missed his train; and while waiting for the next, he wrote her a letter that included these words: "Tell me just this, for I think that I have a right to know: is one of the 'reasons' another man? If so, I 'll behave as well as I can, dear, and try to wish him joy if he deserves it."

She wrote and destroyed some dozen replies, and was still at it when he appeared, interrogative, pale, restless of body. He was sorry to trouble her but the suspense . . . "I suppose I 'm answered by your silence," he ended.

"There is the answer!" and she pointed to the fireplace, where some bits of paper speckled the logs with white. She was standing so as to meet the better what was coming.

"And it is?—"

"No," she answered, turning away.

"You 're not — bound, at least,— to another man?"

Not bound, she said.

At the end of a long silence he took a step nearer.

"Don't touch me!" she whispered fiercely: then,

"Forgive me, France. Can't you possibly — understand?"

Apparently he could not. At least, at the end of a still longer silence he said that he could not.

"I 'm not bound to any man," she repeated slowly, holding to the back of a chair. "I shall never — marry him. But — but — I shall never marry any one else. . . . Do you understand now?"

Apparently he did, for at the end of the longest silence of all — in which Zandrie left the room — he uttered a brief command relating to his rival's ultimate spiritual estate, not suitable for the ears of ladies, — especially, for those of the little elderly lady who had come to call and was being ushered into the sitting-room at the moment when the discomfited doctor wheeled to leave it.

As Zandrie had not said all that she had meant to, she wrote the rest.

"I don't know whether you understand or not; but if you love me at all, please, please take my word for it that I never can love you, because I love some one else much better,— no matter whether I ever marry him or not,— and that I am sorry, for my own sake more than for yours. For truly, France, I have it in me to be passionate and wicked and to make people unhappy, and I might have made you unhappier than you think you are now, if I could have loved you. If I were you, I would n't come any more to see

"Yours unhappily,
"A.L."

Is it necessary to write it out, that he did not follow this friendly advice? But whatever he may have looked, he said no more about love or marriage for several months, asked no questions about the man she loved better, and behaved so properly that in June Zandrie consented to visit his mother and sister Alice, who were at their home in Boston for a few months after two years in Paris. They were to return to France in the fall.

And so it came about that in June the twins made Mrs. Lynde a week's visit and that Zandrie did not see them. And then this teeming month closed with an event of more importance still,— the financial collapse of the Lynde Chemical Company.

CHAPTER XXIV

CONTAINING LAWYER'S ADVICE

Yes; poor, dear, scientific Poggy, who knew almost everything but the science of making money, was ruined,— if that dramatic term befits a man who has been barely able to pay the interest on a house mortgaged to two-thirds of its value, his taxes, and the current expenses of housekeeping, and whose wife has paid her dress-makers' bills from her own income. But to the Lyndes at any rate, the past stood for the day of prosperity, and the future was hard to face. Their city property was attached, and the laboratory bought by a company that retained Mr. Lynde on a salary as master chemist; but the salary for two years would barely cover Poggy's debts, and he was determined to pay. And so, but for Mrs. Lynde's income, which included the rent from her sea-shore cottage, they must ultimately have found themselves dependent upon the charity of their creditors, relatives, or friends. Trial by newspaper closed with an honorable acquittal for Poggy. "The collapse of the Lynde Chemical Company," said the *Town Crier*, "is an honest, straightforward failure, due in part, we

are informed on irrefutable authority, to changes in the tariff, and in part to bad judgment." But although this verdict of "dull but good hearted" ought to have sent him on his way, grateful and somewhat consoled, the perverse little man hung his head, scuttling through the streets in all the nervous silence of a convicted felon. At a distance, he passed for an old man; nearer, he suggested a puzzled child with the eyes of a whipped spaniel. His wife's jokes during the first months after his failure sometimes brought a startled comprehension to his eyes, but no laughter; and most of them went by unheeded. She made them, nowadays, only in his presence or when she was with certain acquaintances of whom she was not very fond. Alone with Zandrie, she was almost as silent as he, and when spoken to, often answered petulantly. For it was the poor lady's first meeting with poverty, and the ways of that ungracious dame were little to her taste.

Zandrie, meanwhile, coming to understand the details of the catastrophe by degrees, discovered that all things may and that most things do have commercial value, in the light of which prodigious knowledge she began to see her past self as a thankless object of charity, and her present self as a costly encumbrance. For, through more than a year now she had been accepting the gifts of expensive shelter, expensive food, and expensive clothes, with the unreflecting, simple ingratitude of a child. A dog, she said, would not have

taken favors so for granted. The idea that mere physical existence could cost money, was absolutely new to her; combined with the realization that hers cost what looked, in the glare of her brand-new economics, like an inordinate sum,— and cost it to those too who could now hardly pay for their own needs,— it was appalling. And so, when the Lyndes moved in August into a small second-floor apartment and kept no maid, Zandrie plunged into the housework with frantic zeal; though as a matter of fact, some such activity of body was what she had craved through all the restless year of stifled passion, and was welcome even now, in August.

Late in the afternoon of the sultry day on which they moved, a box of roses came for her. Her eyes filled as she pressed the moist, exquisitely cool petals against her eyelids. It was a brilliant coup of the Doctor's, that, though he sent flowers often enough, to be sure. But to-day was so *particularly* horridly hot, and the rooms in such a dreadful state of chaos! And so, "dear France!" she whispered in a sudden exuberance of gratitude that — Well, perhaps if he had come in at that moment . . .

Yet when he did arrive only two days later, his reception was not encouraging. She met him, in fact, in a blaze of wrath. "I won't have it!" she said, when they were alone on the small balcony. "I've seen Mr. Johnson this very morning. I was writing to you now. He told me."

Dr. Royce raised his eyebrows in innocence. "Who is Mr. Johnson, in the first place?"

Zandrie stamped her foot — to keep from crying.

"On my honor," he said. "Oh, the Lyndes' lawyer?"

She eyed him eloquently till she made sure of her voice. "I will not have your help. I can support myself soon somehow,— I know I can. And I ought n't to live here any longer anyway." Her logic was probably not quite plain to the doctor, either. "Aunt Edith does n't want me any more." She had called Mrs. Lynde "Aunt Edith" since early in the winter. "She does n't! She hates me sometimes, because I don't tell her everything,— and because she says I 'm volcanic and she hates everything that explodes; and yet she always wants new things, too. She wants me to marry you!" This last was punctuated by a burst of tears.

The Doctor started towards her but wisely grasped a post of the balcony instead. "My thanks to Mrs. Lynde," he said.

"She — she always leaves us alone together. And Mr. Johnson was ab-abominable! O how could you think it would help your cause to assume so! I never encouraged you the least bit, but I *loved* you compared with — with now. I —"

"Alex!" he interrupted in a tone that caught her attention, for it was neither of anger nor self-defense. "I am in the dark, and I think that you are."

She stared at him as though she were indeed.

"Suppose you tell me," he said, "what Mr. Johnson told you."

"About your — about the offer of money,— the 'provision' for me. . . . You don't mean —"

"I know absolutely nothing about it. Some one has offered, you say, to provide —"

"And Mr. Johnson said — Why France! — are you *sure?*"

"Sure that I have n't offered to support you on the assumption of a possible future right? Yes, I 'm quite sure. If you knew a little more about the world, dear,—"

"You know nothing about it — the offer?"

"Nothing. I suppose I shall hope insanely till you marry some one else, but I 'm not so *stupid,* in the first place, as to —"

"O France,— I 'm sorry!" And to prove it, she did something for which of course there is no excuse; flung her arms about his neck and wilted the left side of his collar with tears. "No, it 's only an apology!" she gasped, trying to withdraw. "I love any one when I 've hurt their feelings! No, don't touch me any more. But, O listen how it was! I was so troubled about the Lyndes' money matters and could n't talk to *them,* of course, so I went to Mr. Johnson. I wanted so much to understand better. But he only smiled and advised me to marry! Oh! And he said the Lyndes told him some one had of-

fered to provide for me, but that I should doubtless marry soon anyway, and he looked so outrageously sly when he said that! O I hate him! And of course I thought —"

"I see. Your apology was more than I deserved although I was innocent. . . . You *look* as though you 'd been worrying. Why?"

But she scarcely heard, for the affair of the proffered money had become a mystery demanding solution, which a little demon had suddenly offered in one word,—"Julian!"

France had to repeat his question; "Why have you been worrying?"

"The Lyndes might have taken a smaller — less expensive apartment but for me," she said at last, "and could keep a maid."

"Mrs. Lynde never *said* that!"

No answer; but as he was silent, too, she looked up. He took a sudden step nearer and caught her hands. "Dear! come to me! Take me on trust. I 'll make you love me some day. You brave, beautiful little girl! I 'll make you happy somehow. Never mind if you can't love me yet; I 'll be happy enough just trying to make you happy. I ask for nothing now but the right to do that."

"Dear France!" she said, "perhaps you really do love me a little!"

"You 'll marry me?"

"No. Yet of course I 'd be happier — oh, much

happier with you than — here,— except for poor Poggy. I love him dearly. And while you spoke, I even dreamed — But it 's gone!"

"Alex!" he cried. But she herself was gone.

When she told Mrs. Lynde of her talk with the lawyer and explained how she had wanted to understand their financial condition so as to see more clearly how to help, Mrs. Lynde kissed her for the first time in several weeks.

"So you do love me a little still?" Zandrie asked.

But, "Don't be *queer*, dear," was the answer to that.

Zandrie caught her breath, and then went on with her account.

Some one had offered to provide for her, Mrs. Lynde admitted, but she had not the right to tell who, she said; and added that if they had thought of her consulting Mr. Johnson in secret, they would have asked him not to mention the matter. They had decided to refuse the money.

Zandrie winced. "Why did you refuse?"

"Foolish pride, perhaps. We took the responsibility of you and prefer to stand by it."

Stung anew by the sense of alienation, she clasped her hands under her chin, and watched Mrs. Lynde thread a needle. And at last, "Perhaps I ought to marry France," she said.

The idea had never occurred to her before. But once over the border, it invaded her thought again and

again, perhaps for the very reason that she fought it.

For all her confidence that she could soon support herself, her efforts throughout the fall to earn any money whatever had been in vain, and it was December at last. She had no skill in sewing, and was glad, she hated it so; but she had tried to find pupils in French, and had written to an institution for the deaf and dumb, detailing in impassioned language her experience with the McClungs. And meanwhile, it was plain that Mrs. Lynde, though she disliked housework and appreciated Zandrie's help, was tiring of her bargain. Inevitably, perhaps, since she was one of those unemotional persons, in the first place, who find it hard to believe the emotion of others quite genuine; who at best dislike its uncontrolled display, perhaps because it touches their vanity, tacitly demanding something more than they have in themselves to give. "Alex makes me feel like a glacier," she said once. "Don't see why, for I 'm neither icy nor uncommonly slow. But I 'm not a volcano, either. One can love or hate, I take it, as well as keep house, decently and in order." But then, the irritation of living too near a volcano was doubtless aggravated by the volcano's perversity. When a little eruption might have made a diversion, for instance, it would scarcely smoke. Zandrie's reticences were always ill-timed, it seemed. And at last, when only a miraculous combination of favoring circumstances could have saved the day, circumstance itself turned perverse. One day in December, for in-

stance, Poggy came home at noon, his face drawn with some new misery, and so far from seeing humor in the fact that his wife was at a small fire half a mile away, burst into tears. Zandrie, who had never seen a man weep, kissed, comforted, and was scolding gently, her arms about him, when Mrs. Lynde came in. And Mrs. Lynde was a jealous soul, as Zandrie had long since discovered; so the situation was trying for all three.

And so it came about in one way and another that Zandrie sat at her desk on a certain December evening and faced what seemed but the simple fact that she was refusing to exchange a home where she was not needed nor really desired, for one where she was wanted very much. Marriage, that is, still meant little more than an exchange of homes. None of her reading had taught its meaning, and she had never discussed it except with Julian. And so, in refusing to marry France because she did not love him, she called herself a coward at last, whom a brave man might well despise. A coward, and selfish; for, whether France was capable of a love that would meet all tests or not, he was plainly unhappy without her. And she knew that he knew she had little to give.

Little indeed! And whenever more seemed most possible, there would come some new, poignant reminder, like the affair of the proffered money. That bothered her still at moments, for the same teasing sprite that had whispered "Julian," now set specula-

tion whirling about the question "why?" And speculation brought not only memories with their dull, bodily pain, but, lately, a grievous question — the question of Julian's love. For people could love much, and cease to love. Had she not met an instance herself, in Mrs. Lynde? And a man's love, she read, was oftener short lived than a woman's. And so, lacking the knowledge that a man's way of life gives more opportunity to forget than the lives of most women, and not realizing that Julian's had become like a woman's in its dearth of opportunity, she grew to be tormented by doubts. When she asked herself what his having offered the money might prove concerning his love, common sense answered "nothing." If he had asked permission to provide for her, it was only because he was the instrument of her coming to the Lyndes. It was of them that he was mindful. There was nothing — absolutely nothing in her present life to prove or even to hint that he cared for her still.

But for all that, and though she fought her own passion, that passion was still the link that coupled any fact to her life, as a thing of meaning and convincing reality. All other things became at moments a whirl of unrelated, bloodless inanities at which she looked as from afar, indifferent where they came from or whither they went. Whatever had no kinship with her love had therefore no power upon her for ill or good; could not *matter*. And Royce himself was a

part of the whirl till the day when she said "perhaps I ought to marry him." For Julian was at the core of every "ought"; and justification of the sacrifice he had once made was still the heart of her motive to a difficult act. If marriage with France involved sacrifice of herself, what better justification of his? At worst, if he loved her no longer, the score would be cleared. At worst, she could still cling to the pride that he had loved her once as though she were worth the heavy cost; and if he no longer loved her so,— well, that was at least no reason why she should not marry another man. The more why she should! for new surroundings were the best help to forgetting, people said; and she must forget, or . . .

These thoughts, how well she knew them! She had had little peace of her life, these four months past, because of them. She was very weary of wrestling with them, at last.

Her hand moved towards the inkstand, to write to Royce, and then went up to cover her eyes instead. Not while Julian was living! Not while she was uncertain of his love, and hope still lived. For marriage was forever, and even for Julian's sake she could hardly have killed hope with her own hands. Not to-night, at any rate.

But the door of Mrs. Lynde's room opposite, opened suddenly, and Poggy's voice rang out, peevish, almost angry. "Why? . . . Why, for the sake of excitement, I suppose,— for something new. Forever

something new! I told you at the time, I 'd give you six months to tire of your new toy. I warned —"

His wife's voice interrupted. "When it came to adopting her, you were as anxious as I. You were more! — you know you were!"

"Because I was a fool!" cried Poggy, with a passion to which he was, in Zandrie's knowledge of him, a stranger.

She had never witnessed the Lyndes at strife. And she had brought it. And Poggy — Poggy himself had failed her.

"France," she wrote, "come to me *quick!*"

CHAPTER XXV

IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Late in the afternoon of the day after her note to France, she stood on the steps of the Lyndes' apartment watching his retreat. His very back was exultant, and when he turned at the corner to raise his hat to her once more, he did it so eloquently that a little newsboy yelled "Let us pray!"—an idea that pleased the little boy so acutely that he yelled it instead of his paper for several minutes; but the gentleman who had raised his hat took no offence, so that "Yah!" the little boy snorted, "but he's a soft!" That he was an obnoxiously successful, happy person, there was no doubt.

When he had turned the corner, Zandrie put her hand over her eyes and then shivered slightly; but perhaps that was because she stood there without a coat. She was singing, at any rate, a few minutes later as she dressed for supper at the Lawson farm where she was going to-night to help celebrate Flotilla's birthday; and she carried light-heartedness there, as though some drops of the joy of the man she had promised to marry had spilled over into her

own heart. Joy so abundant and bubbling might well overflow. But whatever the reason, it was a merry evening, and the first true merriment that she had known in many months. She romped with the children until they screamed with glee and Charley roared in grief at her departure. How she loved them! — funny, solemn Flotilla, and turbulent Charley, and even forlorn, peevish scrap of a Jamie who smiled and even laughed sometimes when she held him. As she put him to bed to-night, a thought had come that shook her like a burst of music: if she married France, perhaps she might have children of her own! Or was that miracle performed only for those who loved one another, as Sister Andrea once said? Oh, surely not if one were faithful as though one loved, doing daily duties well; if she filled the empty vessel of love with kindness, surely God would count the hard sacrifice worthy of easy love's reward!

The thought followed her as she walked home, Farmer Lawson trudging beside her in silence as though he too were under the spell of the marvelous night; for the full moon hung low over the hills, and although Christmas was at hand, and snow on the fields, the air was tremulous with reminiscences of Indian summer, and the road lay through a white, mist-haunted land created by the spirits of moonlight for ecstacy and dreams.

When they reached the center of the town, the business streets were thronged with Christmas shop-

pers, whose good nature was put to the test by the long halt of the farmer and his companion before a window baited with a distracting bevy of silk petticoats. "My wife's mind," he murmured, "has been deeply set on one of them gewgaws for I don't know how long!" And he stood apparently hypnotized by the spectacle till Zandrie, laughing, dragged him away. She would have liked to stop herself, however, in front of the Catholic church a few blocks on, to listen to the music that streamed out through an open door; she would have liked better still to go inside, for the night was made for music, and the organist played well: she knew, because he was Julian's friend and she had gone to mass in order to see him and hear him play, one morning during the period of sharpest conflict with her own will. "I am going to mass once more," she had told the Lyndes, laughing, "for old times' sake!" And she had for a fact recited her rosary at the Virgin's altar, to the intent that Julian's will might be turned at last. But her belief in his steadfastness was stronger than her confidence in the Virgin's power to touch him. When she went to church at all nowadays, it was with the Lyndes, who were Unitarians. But the reason why she did not go into the church to-night was because Farmer Lawson's own mind was now deeply set upon getting her home as quickly as possible, that he might hurry back to the shop of silk petticoats. As for the reminder of the toilsome past, brought by the organ music of Julian's

friend, it could not touch the peace of her present hour, which was the peace of a long-fought resolve and a struggle ended.

On their way through one of the quieter streets she awoke to a crescendo of curious sounds that presently unraveled into a creak of wheels, a shuffle of slow footsteps, and a torrent of foreign words poured out so rapidly that at first she did not recognize them as French. Suddenly the voice was cut off by a laugh at whose sound her heart-beats stopped and then leaped struggling against an onslaught of smothering joy.

They were coming towards her, were almost upon her,— Carter and a stranger and Julian. He was leaning back in his chair, without a hat, listening to the hurried French of an old man with long white side-whiskers, who walked beside him. The moon shone full on his face, where the last of the laugh lingered so that for a moment the dream-Julian of the past was there before her eyes, with face untouched by passion or pain, beautiful under the magic of the moon. But before he had passed, the smile was gone, the lines were plain beside his mouth, and she saw his face willful and human, as she had seen it last, so that she must have cried out to him but for the look of a stranger that he gave her.

It was over already! They had turned a corner and were gone. He had passed without knowing her, because her face was hid in the shadow of her hat. Oh, but it was strange to feel Julian's eyes meet hers

without an answer! He had passed so near that by stretching out her arm she might have touched his forehead. But she had heard the laugh for which her ears had starved for a year and a half.

Mr. Lawson turned several times to look after the group. "Bust *me*," he said at last, "if that wa'n't Billy's Mr. Furness,— that chap in the chair; but bust me if I know the dago with the whiskers." After a profound pause he added, "He ought to dock them whiskers."

A tempestuous need to be alone shook Zandrie, and she stopped. "See!" she said, "there 's no need of your coming farther out of your way with me. I 'm almost home,— quite safe,— only three blocks from this corner. Thank you so much."

And so, though he demurred a little, she was rid of him.

Then a blind impulse turned her back towards the spot where Julian and she had met, dragging her at last at a run. But when she reached it and leaned faint and quivering against a fence, gripping its iron palings, the emptiness of the place mocked her, till at last, with hands clasped hard against her throat, she began to walk on towards the corner that he had turned. No trace of him: the street was as empty as though she had dreamed of his passing; yet he could not have gone very far; he must easily be found.

She broke into a run again. The year of struggle to forget was itself forgotten,— everything forgotten

now but Julian and the need for sight and touch and sound of him once more. She ran as though pursued, breathing in sobs.

All at once, before she could quite stop, she had stumbled against something in her path, and then stared at it in panting stupefaction. It was Julian's chair. When she looked up at last, she saw that she was at the steps of the Catholic church, and she understood; he was in there, listening to the music.

The church was dark but for a few moonbeams raveled by stained glass into strands of misty color, for the little red glow of the chancel lamp, and one light in the gallery of the left transept, where the white-haired foreigner sat at the organ. She remembered now how, when he had passed in the moonlight, his absurdly long side-whiskers seemed to be falling in two white streams down his black coat. Julian's friend, the organist of the church, stood beside him answering questions about the stops. Here and there one could make out the kneeling figure of a woman. But half way up the aisle along which Zandrie stole, two men sat, one in front of the other, and the nearer was Julian. With head bent low, she crept into the pew behind him.

His arm lay along the back of the seat, his hand so close that by bending ever so slightly, her lips could have touched it. The whisper of his name could make him turn and know her — the lightest whisper; yet she made never a sound, nor stirred, for, blindly, some-

how, she had stumbled into the idea that to make herself known just now would spoil the peace of the hour for him; that he was rarely happy to-night, so that for his sake she must be still at least until the music that had begun again was finished. And then —? Her thought reeled, and the words "for his sake" made a riot in her brain, domineering over reason and even the mad impulse that hardly dared name itself as yet. And in the end "for his sake" won. The months in the school of self sacrifice had not gone for nothing, after all; and she knelt there like a good believer, quite still but for the trembling that she could not master. But he must hear the beating of her heart, she thought.

"Awful prayerful woman," Carter whispered, but got no answer.

A minute later he tiptoed out to fetch the chair that he had left at the foot of the steps.

If Julian had turned while he was gone . . . But he was attending to the old musician who was saying his say in the face of the moonlit night, unabashed; and because he was listening, she tried to listen too. While the organ whispered violin mysteries, however, it could not hold her, for in this hour she gripped reality at its core, and mysteries, questionings, doubts, withdrew till they were as though they had never been. But a hymn of blaring victory and many-voiced praise was another matter; and when there had come a pause out of which stole a limpid note, and

another joined with it, and yet others, till the throbbing pedal-tones closed in, helping the chord to climb until it burst at the top of its glory into a tumult of voices challenging the brain and stirring the heart — then the heart of her leapt above the riot and rode with the highest voice as a bird on the wind.

And then it was over and gone — locked away forever by the past in its cell of silence; and Julian caught his breath quiveringly.

"Julien!" the player called from his gallery. "C' est une fugue effroyable — ça — et immortale, hein?" It was a merry old voice, silver, somehow, as his hair. "Mine! — mine own fugue! You reco'-nize? You have often play it, hein? — in the old times? . . . Mais mon Dieu! — il est tard! Il faut que je fuisse!" There were some hurried words to the man beside him, whom he left to close the organ; then a clattering descent of wooden stairs.

The music was gone: a moment more and Julian would follow it. One must spend well the treasure still left. His hand lay so near that she could see the veins and all but feel the vital warmth that pledged its reality. The yearning to kiss it cut like a sabre. . . . Why not kiss it? What harm if she did? She owed him no more than the peace of the hour just given: he had listened untroubled, and the music was over. It was only silly fear of him, then, that held her own hands against her lips; and he had done his worst already in putting her from

him, to grope through the world, alone. Then why not dare to snatch what draught of joy offered itself in the wilderness where he had set her?

She took her hands from her lips to touch the cup. It was too late. The old musician was come to take the part of her fear against her. The cup was broken.

Head lifted and eyes wide with despair, she watched his agile transit over the pew partitions to the aisle and Julian's side. With a moonbeam blessing his white head, he might have passed for some merry old saint instead of a thief of hope.

When he flung an arm about Julian's neck and kissed his cheek, she all but cried out. "Julien aimé!" She caught the whisper easily enough. "Tu aurais joué aussi bien que moi. Mais oui! — c'est tout certain. . . . Tu as de bien bon courage, mais . . . c'est damnable! — c'est impossible! . . . Monsieur Widor remember you, he has said. I have ask him always when we encounter, and he has not forget. It is a grand performer, that! — greater than me, hein? But! — my train it will flee away without me unless — Au revoir. Au revoir. At the next time we have — plus de causerie, n'est-ce pas? Au revoir! Il faut que je —" But he was speeding down the aisle without telling what.

The young man in the organ-loft leaned over the rail. "Makes a Yankee musician feel like going out of business! . . . Join you outside, Furness. Have to lock up. Don't wait: I 'll overtake you."

"Pick up your dolly, then," Julian said to Carter.

She watched Carter lift him into the chair that stood at hand, facing her; and for a few seconds, in the thin wash of light from the organ-loft, she saw his face again, and he saw her. She saw incredulous, questioning recognition flash into his eyes, but no more because Carter's great body came between, blotting each from the other's sight.

So he was lost again out of her life — gone like the passing of music. Another flower torn up by the roots. The spot where his hand had lain was already cold. Yet a minute ago and he was there within sound and touch — was he not? That present while it lasted seemed real enough — surely real enough to have stayed a little longer; it could not have escaped so soon — slipped with the cheap moments of every day back into the ghost-ranks of the past. So soon but a memory? She had thought she could tear it out of time and so keep it and its Julian forever. But reach out as she might, the place where he had sat was empty. O the madness not to have kissed his hand while it lay close! — not to have whispered his name when they were alone but for the men in the far-away gallery. The bitter foolishness, too bitter to be wept for!

She did not remember until she reached home that this was the day of her betrothal.

CHAPTER XXVI

INTERRUPTED

It was half past five in the afternoon, two weeks lacking one day after the incident of the Catholic church, and the Lyndes' dinner was in danger of being delayed because Mrs. Lynde had gone to the laboratory to meet Poggy, and Zandrie sat alone by the kitchen table, staring at a saucepan in which the potatoes were boiling all to pieces, yet seeing nothing in the world but an aisle dim as with moonlight, that dissolved now and again into a shadowy face. With a little moan at last, she shut her eyes in order to see the face more clearly, but with the movement of her eyelids it vanished altogether. Yet the saucepan still hissed with vexation and hinted in vain; for she was thinking now of some words that she had written to Royce on that night of the church episode and torn up under the shock of the realization that in refusing to marry him she would be breaking her word. For although she had lied often, she had broken a solemn promise never; and of the two offenses it seemed probable that the second would be even more hateful to Julian than the first. Ever since that night, however, the temptation had come clamoring, and for-

bidden thoughts that she had believed conquered, had swarmed back to the warfare; so that at moments, as now, she would push the troubling present aside and hold out a reckless hand to the past, inviting memory to do its worst. But even without her will, Royce's unhesitating acceptance of the gift of herself as his right, and her struggle not to shrink from his caresses, — these must have been bound up with comparisons tormenting with their weight of forbidden fruit. Memories must have come flocking, perhaps, even without that glimpse of Julian's face. In spite of the distractions of Christmas, she had had a bad two weeks, without doubt.

Yet for all the anguish of reawakened passion; for all the new terror of binding herself to another than Julian; and for all the scorn of herself because she could crush neither the passion nor the fear, she had not once since that night wanted to die: for the first time in a year and a half, she wanted passionately to live. For what? For a life with France? Her word was pledged to him; yet it was impossible to picture her future self as France's wife, bound forever to live with him in peace, grateful for his love though writhing under the touch of his lips; bound to perform housewifely duties faithfully, though knowing that under that faithfulness lay the love of another and the will to live worthily for that other's sake. So it must be, said reason; for her word was given. Yet imagination balked at the task of making such a future

look real, and Hope laughed at the confusion he had wrought. Poor Hope! — stone blind himself and gone mad, of course.

Alas for the Lyndes' potatoes! Precisely as the saucepan began to clatter its lid in a last frantic effort to attract attention, the door-bell rang, and Zandrie, flinging off the big pink apron in which Dr. Royce insisted that she ought to receive all callers, went to the door and opened to the Wyndam twins.

"But Mrs. Lynde said you were visiting friends, this vacation!" she gasped. "Oh, you 're so big and tall! — taller than I! How dare you!"

Lee grinned uncontrollably upon finding that the Lyndes were out. "Cousin Ju" had made them come, he explained frankly; "but nobody 'd think of making a regular call on *you*, you know."

His tactful brother groaned. "Would n't *mind*, of course he means. . . . We 've been thinking up things to talk about to the Lyndes. Lee wrote some on his cuff."

Lee examined his work with pride. "Christmas presents," he read. "School to-morrow; Carter. . . . Carter 's gone daown east to visit his folks."

Zandrie laughed at the reproduction of Carter's Maine coast drawl.

"He 's been practicing." Marshalled grinned. "Cousin Ju says 'raound' and 'daown' himself — did you ever notice? — only not through his nose like Carter — because he 's a Marylander. . . .



There 's an Irishman taking Carter's place — lots more fun than old Cart."

Lee had been inspecting the apartment. "Stuffy little hole, is n't it," was his comment.

"Seems all right, though," said his brother, "after Mrs. Bright's. I say, Miss Alex! — that 's the *bummest* boarding-house. Cousin Ju would n't stand it, I guess, if he had to see those people shovel in their meals."

"Marsh 's getting stuck up," said Lee.

"I 'm not, Miss Alex. You never saw such people. There 's a Mrs. Smith comes to dinner in a — a — I don't know what women call it, but it 's a sort of pillow-case with Jap sleeves and lots of lace, and she tries to pump us about Cousin Ju, and even her husband can't stand her. And I don't see how we *can* stay there all summer!"

"'T is n't decided we 've got to."

"But if only Cousin Ju 'd say positively that we have n't! I wish Grandma Wyndam had n't died this fall — we had such jolly good summers down there in Maine. That is n't the only reason, of course," he added loyally.

Zandrie had already heard from the Lyndes of the older Mrs. Wyndam's death and wondered what Julian would do with his wards.

Marshall did his best to enlighten her. "If we are n't at Mrs. Bright's, next summer, goodness knows where we 'll be. Uncle John Wyndam 's nice enough,

but he 's got too many kids of his own to want us all summer. I bet it 'll end in Aunt Marjorie's having *her* way. She wants us — Cousin Ju and us — to live all together with her in Maryland, in Grandpa Marshall's house. She thinks we ought to have a regular home somewhere — though seems to me school does well enough."

It did not occur to Zandrie to ask who " Aunt Marjorie " might be; the possibility of Julian's going far off to live startled away all other thought.

" We should n't be very near any water there," Marshall was complaining. " And what 's the use of that knock-about if we can't sail her? And besides, how do we know how we 'd like Aunt Marjorie? Cousin Ju does n't seem to know much about her himself, it 's so long since —"

" She was nice to us at the time Mother died," Lee reminded.

" Why don't you say you *want* to live in Maryland, and be done with it? "

" 'Cause I don't happen to be spoilin' for a fight." Lee smiled wickedly and picked up a book.

Until she should give Royce some notion of when she would marry him, the Lyndes insisted that the engagement must not be announced. It had occurred to her often enough, of course, that if Julian knew, he might somehow save her — provided that he loved her still; might somehow understand that a horrible plexus of circumstance and motive had twisted her will into

consent to a loveless marriage; might love her at the last too well to let her go certainly and forever. It was only because of a doubt of his loving her still, that she had not told him of the engagement. But now the doubt was overborne by the temptation of the means at hand. She caught her breath, glanced at Lee, who had thrown aside the book and opened a window, and drew Marshall nearer. "Tell Julian," she whispered, "but no one else in the world — not even Lee — I trust you, Marsh dear — Tell Julian I 'm going to marry — to marry some one whom I don't —"

But Lee's excited voice rose above hers. "It *is* a fire, and a jolly big one! Quick, Marsh! Miss Alex! — O look! — it just flared up like thunder!"

Marsh dashed to the window. The opportunity to finish her message vanished with both boys, who caught up their caps and fled.

"You can come too, Miss Alex," Lee managed to articulate on his wild course down stairs, "if you can run!"

She stood at the open window, unhearing, scarcely seeing.

It was after seven o'clock at last, and the Lyndes had not returned. Mrs. Lynde had probably persuaded poor Poggy to escort her to the fire, which was evidently in the center of the town and by no means small. So, when half past seven came, and yet no Lyndes, she ate her dinner (minus potatoes) alone,

amused but also disgusted by her adopted aunt's inveterate childishness. At eight she began to work on some translations of French poems that she was making, at a suggestion of one of her friends, for a new magazine. She had already received the lordly sum of twenty dollars for two translated stories.

No sign of the Lyndes until half past eight, when Mrs. Lynde telephoned. "So sorry not to have thought of telephoning sooner,— but such an excitement —! We 'll be home soon now if we don't die of starvation en route. Any dinner left? . . . To the fire? Why of course! Thought we might find you there,— though the crowd was so thick that Poggy and I both came out an inch taller. . . . Don't *know* where it was? Why my dear! — the printing house on Center street, and Mrs. Bright's too. Greatest sight you ever — But we 've been telephoning to every hotel in town twice over, to find Julian. Can't imagine where he 's been spirited away to. Seemed only friendly to look after him if we could, but he 's given us the slip. Vanished — vanished like smoke!"

CHAPTER XXVII

CONTAINING PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE

It was true that although presumably alive and unscathed, he was by no means to be found, even when the Lyndes renewed their inquiries at the hotels and sought out his distracted landlady, whom they found searching the ruins of her home for her mother's china teaset. "Mr. Furness? . . . He 's went," she sobbed. "They 've all went. Everything 's went." That her boarders had gone, seemed not wholly to their discredit, considering that the house was roofless, floorless, and very damp; but the poor woman took their departure from the premises as a desertion and affront. For the loss of the teaset she was inconsolable. The house was insured,— O yes! — but insurance obviously would not put shattered ancestral china together. She thought the last name of Mr. Carter's substitute was Hogan, but did not know his initials or address, and had no idea where he had taken his employer. She considered it unbecoming of Mr. Furness not to have communicated with her.

There being nine Hogans in the directory, the Lyndes did not follow up that clue. The twins had not returned to them that evening, and as Julian had

not written to inquire about them, it seemed probable that they had met him, spent the night where he had — doubtless at the house of some friend — and gone back to school the next morning. Mrs. Lynde wrote to them but had not extracted an answer. Meanwhile she remembered that the last time she had seen him, he had said he might take his doctor's urgent advice some day and consult a Boston surgeon who had treated several cases of spinal injury with brilliant success; it was possible, she thought, that the fire had precipitated his decision. "Telephone his doctor here," Poggy suggested; but the doctor himself was in Boston at a G. A. R. convention. "And what 's the use of all this detective work anyway?" Mrs. Lynde asked, "seeing we could n't offer him more than standing-room, and our little Poggy's suits — supposing his own went up in smoke, which they probably did n't — Poggy's would be yards too short? What should we say to him if we found him? Really now, I wonder what it 's all been for — this chase?"

It had served at least to keep Julian well in mind.

On the sixth day after the fire, two letters came, which Zandrie opened without enthusiasm, though the first held a check for ten dollars from the new magazine that had already accepted two of her translations, and the other was from her fiancé.

"Dear little girl," the letter began, and there followed phrases which lovers have written before to their absent ladies and which had already lost their

novelty for Zandrie; following these, the news that his sister Alice was to be married in Paris in June. Seeing that it was a long letter, she sat down on the lowest step of the stairs with a little sigh. The second sheet promised more interest, however. "Did I ever tell you of a brilliant fellow I once heard play the organ in Paris? You've heard of Widor, of course. He was a friend of Uncle Louis's — Mother's French brother-in-law — and used to let me come up to his organ-loft to see him make his feet go. Great sport! Well, one day as I was passing St. Sulpice and heard the organ going like mad, I went in. 'Jove!' I thought, 'he must have had a good dinner!' It was more joyous somehow than his usual playing. When it stopped, I started up to the gallery, but met a fellow of about my age on the stairs. 'Monsieur Widor's still up there?' I asked in perfectly good French. 'Did n't notice him,' he answered in English — for which alone I could have collared him of course. 'Was n't he playing just now?' I asked instead. 'Heaven forbid!' said he. 'I've been tooting up there these last two hours.' Well, his six feet of magnificent, healthy body did n't fit my idea of a musical prodigy, and I swore mildly in French. 'Not such a sacré bleu fool as I look, you mean?' he called back with a smile of happy insolence. When I asked Widor about him, he said he could do anything he wanted with an organ — but did n't always want — and added that his manners were 'tres americaines.

Mais ce ne veut rien dire — il est plein de génie,'— for playing, at least, but I believe he said he had n't any great gift for composition. I did n't see him again except once — at the Bal Bullier, where he was flirting with the best-dressed girl in sight; and his flirting was as his playing — masterly, joyous, and 'plein de génie'. Every girl in the room had at least the corner of her eye on him,— and he *was* a contrast to their Frenchmen. I was standing next a miserable little Italian artist, I remember, who shrugged his shoulders when I spoke of him, and called him 'American-ne devil.' Somehow the mere sight of him roused my envy, and I 've always pictured his career as an irresponsible progress through whatever triumphs happened to hit his fancy, from the out-playing of Widor, to the cracking of what lady's heart he chose. Well, this morning Ward called me to help at the examination of a man who has come to be operated on — experimented on, I 'd rather say, though Ward is confident as usual — and at first sight I knew I 'd seen him before. Though his manner did n't invite familiarity, I asked him who and what he was, and 'a proof reader' was all he vouchsafed at first." Zandrie caught her breath and read on now as though this were the letter of a lover she loved. "'Maybe so,' said I, 'but whatever you 've made yourself, the Lord made you something else.' 'Only a d—d musician,' says he, with a delightful smile. And then I recognized him as my Paris man. And

what do you suppose his enviable career has been? Just after I saw him, he was crippled for life; and in a day or two I 'm to give him ether for an operation that at best can probably only lessen the pain he has had these nine years that I 've been envying him. A regular Sunday-school story, you see. If he had a little Alex to love him, I might envy him still — though I 'll make you love me to distraction yet — see if I don't! I hope to find time to see something of my genius with the spoiled life: he looks interesting, and he has pluck. Whew! I tell you, dear, if a doctor has a sense of the dramatic and an eye for color, his life —"

But the rest had no bearing on Zandrie's life.

However good an eye Dr. Royce undoubtedly had, it had failed in the present case to see quite all the colors.

The man must be Julian: the coincidences shoved all doubt aside; and in her own room, with the door locked, she re-read, feverishly, greedily, the letter that at first had seemed too long.

An hour later she was on her way down stairs, dressed for going out; and when Mrs. Lynde asked where she was going, she answered "to the Lawson farm," caring not at all that it was a lie. First, she cashed her check at the bank where Poggy had deposited for her the twenty dollars already earned by her translations, though she had begged the Lyndes to accept the money and so to let her feel that she

was helping. Next she took a train for Boston.

During the hour in her room, the sickness of excitement that had confused her thought since the incident of the Catholic church and yet more during the week since the fire, passed, leaving reason to travel smoothly to its ends. And first, reason saw that her hope now lay in Julian's knowing all. If he knew that for all her fight to forget, the past was meeting her, lasso in hand, at every turn; if he knew that there was a thwarting spirit on her track, forever snaring her with fatal reminders; if he knew that she loved him invincibly still, and that because of that very love, and to prove herself worthy, she had bound herself to another man — "Oh, but I was mad!" she moaned — if he knew and if he loved her still, he would take her back and save her. And perhaps if France too knew all, he would release her of his own accord from her promise; or if not,— no matter! She would break it herself, if need be, and compel Julian to understand the need. France knew that she loved some one else than himself,— but no more, she thought. It had never seemed strange that he asked no questions. He seemed as confident that her love would meet his at last, as though he had forgotten what she had told him — that there was an Other One whom she loved though she could not have him. . . . Curious,— that Julian's renunciation should ever have seemed so final! . . . Even if France had discovered lately that Julian and she had known

each other, could he guess that Julian was that Other One? If he had guessed, and if he loved her as — well, as Julian had loved her — would he not have spoken? — have asked if he could help her? But she believed he could not have guessed. Nor could Julian possibly know that she was engaged, unless Marshall had given her message,— which was unlikely, considering the excitement of the fire. The boy had hardly heard the message himself.

So she was going to Boston to tell the truth to each; and going secretly lest Mrs. Lynde should insist upon going with her, and make delay. And delay might bring confusion of thought once more, and the distortion of vision that had made it seem necessary to marry France. Besides, she knew nothing about Julian's plans: he might be going to Maryland in a day or two,— for all she knew of operations.

Dr. Ward's private hospital was part of a prosperous block near Back Bay station. The liveried person who opened the door, left her in a reception room while he went to ask whether Mr. Furness could receive visitors. She smiled at the memory of another visit to a hospital, and its precious absurdities. To-day there would be no Mrs. Deming, at least! But although that episode was so long ago — fifty years at the lowest — and so very absurd, her eyes filled. And when she brushed away the tears, she saw that some one was watching her from the doorway.

It was a lady in black, with a widow's veil, from



under which her blue eyes regarded Zandrie very searchingly. "You wanted to see my son?" she asked at last, moving forward but watching Zandrie still. She stepped with exquisitely supple grace.

"Your son? . . . No."

"Mr. Furness? It was you who asked to see Mr. Furness, was n't it?"

"Yes."

A little flush stole to the lady's face, but her eyes still met Zandrie's. "He is my son. I am Mrs. Roswell."

"He has no mother," Zandrie said at last. "His father and mother are dead,— like mine." Though she stared at the woman who called herself Julian's mother, she saw instead Julian's young face on Father Haggarty's pillow, the forehead puckered with little lines of pain as she asked "And are your father and mother dead too?" and he answered almost sullenly, "Yes — both." Yet it was not wholly a hullucination, for the eyes into which her own were actually looking, were so like Julian's, that — She sank back into the chair from which she had risen.

Mrs. Roswell smiled. "You 're surprised? But it 's really not so strange after all. Several of his acquaintances don't know of his mother, perhaps,—of his having a mother alive; for you see, I married again when he was so very young, and have lived all over the world ever since, the way we poor wives of navy officers have to. We 've actually hardly known each

other till lately — Sonnie and I. He telegraphed me of his sudden decision to have this operation, and I arrived here from St. Louis last night. But I 'll never leave him again,— shall never have to, as my poor husband — My dear child, you 're ill!"

The lady's voice seemed to come from far away, borne on the sound of rushing waters that Zandrie could not see because of a sudden darkness. But she felt a hand on her shoulder, and the light returned so that she saw Julian's — no, the lady's eyes, once more: and there was no kindness in them, in spite of the kindly attitude and the kindly, musical voice. "I 'll send for one of the nurses. You 're faint."

"No," and Zandrie sat up bravely. "I only want to see — Julian. Then — it will all be right. He 'll tell me the truth, and —"

"You can't see him now. I 'm sorry, but even his mother can't see him now. He 's barely out of the ether."

"He has had the operation?"

"Early this morning, and —"

"It 's all over? Then I can see him — and I must. Dr. Royce!" — she started towards the door — "I must see Dr. Royce! He 'll let me see Julian."

The liveried person was entering the room. Dr. Royce had left the hospital an hour ago, he said: would she leave a message?

Was it true that no one could see Mr. Furness? she asked.



Quite impossible to-day, he told her.

The disappointment was exquisite . . . And yet, had she really believed that she should see and speak with him to-day? The idea of life without him had taken such root after all, that she could not tear it out all at once.

Mrs. Roswell stood at the window — a silhouette whose every curve held grace. Even at fifty, Marjorie Marshall was one of the most beautiful women that Zandrie had seen. The poor child went to her at last and took her hands. "I believe you are his mother, though he never spoke of you — except once, years ago, when he said — yes, he said you were dead. Perhaps I shall understand some day."

Mrs. Roswell smiled. "It must have been when I was in Hawaii, and there was a report of Captain Roswell's death — and mine. Will you tell me who you are?"

"I am — Zandrie."

"Zandrie. . . . It 's an odd, sweet name, but I have to admit it 's new to me."

"He never — ?"

"No, Zandrie,— he never spoke of you. Do pardon me! — but since you would ask me — And he told me a great deal, last night; but . . . We 're going to be very happy together, I think,— Sonnie and I. He has needed me for so long! — so long! But I 've come back to him to stay, at last . . . Will you leave any message?"

There was a desk in the room, for the use of visitors. Zandrie wrote her message.

"JULIAN:

"I had to come: don't be displeased. I will never come again if you tell me not to. I am engaged to a man I don't love. You see, I can't live with the Lyndes any more because they are very poor now and yet won't let me help them with my own money that I have earned; and besides, they don't love me any more, all through my own fault; and this man — I'll tell you his name if ever I see you again — wanted me so much that at last I promised to marry him, because it seemed my duty. I think now that I was insane; yet I shall keep my promise, of course, unless you love me still. I have often doubted lately that you loved me still. It seemed as though, if you did, you must somehow know my trouble and speak to me — that night in the church, for instance. That is a foolish idea, perhaps. But at any rate, some people can stop loving in a year and a half,— even good, noble people; and if you are one of them, I shall never blame you in my inmost thought.

"Julian!— I thought I knew you, but of a sudden I doubt that too. Why did you never tell me you had a mother? I am all confused. But this I know: either that you will write to me, and all will be well forever after; or that you don't love me, and I shall marry the other man and never see you again, nor you, me. God knows which,— you and God. If you don't love me, you will not write, and so I shall know. You could never do me the bitter wrong to pretend to love me. And so, if you don't write, I shall understand and never trouble you again. But if you do happen to love me still, my knowing it will do no harm at least, will it? Oh, if you do, you must tell me! I am quite grown up now.

"ZANDRIE."

She gave the folded sheets to Julian's mother.

"You came from out of town to see my dear boy?" Mrs. Roswell asked; and again there was no kindness in her eyes, though she smiled. "He 'll be so sorry, I 'm sure. Perhaps you 'll come again?"

"Perhaps."

"Or visit us in Maryland? That would be delightful. We 're going there as soon as he is able, and we southerners keep open house, you know." Her smile of invitation and dismissal was wholly exquisite. Zandrie caught her out-stretched hand up to her lips.

As she had written to Julian, she was confused. Her first thought, after leaving the hospital, was to find France and tell him what she had planned to tell. But even supposing that she could find him, would it not be better to wait until hearing from Julian . . . if indeed he should write? For, if he did not answer her note, there would be nothing left for her but to marry France and try to make him happy; and he would be none the happier for knowing all. She shivered a little . . . and decided to wait.

Upon reaching the Lyndes' at four o'clock, she found them worried and puzzled, for Royce had come at noon, had gone to the Lawsons' for her and learned that she had not been there; then had telephoned to all her other friends in the hope of finding her. Her train must have passed his on her way home.

When she had to acknowledge that she had told a

lie, and refused to explain, even Poggy was hurt to the verge of anger.

During her absence, as she learned that evening, a letter had come from Marshall Wyndam telling of Julian's where-abouts and how the three of them had spent the night of the fire at the house of his friend, the organist of the Catholic church. "Old lady Bright's house was beginning to go up in smoke when we got there and the policemen did n't want to let us through the line, but we told them it was our boarding house, but we did n't have a chance to rescue Cousin Ju because the Irishman had done it already and we met them outside near the ropes talking with Cousin Ju's friend, and he made us all pile into his house where he lives with his brother and mother, quite a nice old lady, for the night. Cousin Ju saved some papers and Mother's miniature but not many other articles and we all had to get some new clothes, but never mind, it was a great old lark."



CHAPTER XXVIII

SHORT BECAUSE HURRIED

If ever a poor soul had reason for feeling discouraged, Mrs. Lynde insisted, or excuse for breaking his engagement — if he wanted to break it, and she really did n't see why he should n't want to, at this rate — Dr. Royce was the soul. Zandrie had been outrageously capricious, not to say absolutely cruel, of late.

And Zandrie assented.

" Yet I do believe you 're fond of him. If not — But he 's so nice! . . . Alex, what *is* the matter? "

At least half the matter — though she did not explain to Mrs. Lynde — was that Julian had not answered her note. And it was now four months since her trip to Boston.

Two months and a half after that, he had written to the Lyndes, apologizing for not having thanked them sooner for the kindly interest they had taken in his welfare at the time of the fire, and explaining how he and the twins had spent the night with his friend; also, how the destruction of his quarters combined

with his decision to live with his mother, had made it seem best to go to Boston at once for the operation — which was proving successful, he said. "The wicked old pain is almost gone and I 'm learning to walk three steps on crutches. I could have done it years ago, but for the pain. Don't I feel right capable!" He and his mother were planning to move to the old Marshall house in Maryland, in a month or two. And then he ended the letter with "regards to Zandrie."

Her despair, leagued perhaps with wounded pride, held her from asking the Lyndes anything about his mother, and their few comments on his plan to live with her threw little light on the history of Marjorie Marshall.

Five weeks later there was another letter, from Maryland and quite short, ending with "Dr. Royce tells me he is engaged to Zandrie. Please congratulate her for me."

"But why in the world should France have told him?" Mrs. Lynde asked. "He was n't to tell a soul but his family and Dr. Ward."

But Zandrie offered no reason; and if France explained, it was not in his fiancée's presence. His having told, of course argued some intimacy with Julian; yet, though her eyes questioned him at times with an almost angry envy that he might and perhaps did see Julian daily, she asked nothing in words. And Royce himself had not mentioned him since the letter about him, except briefly in another, in which he had



written "by the way," that the man whom he had heard play in Paris turned out to be a certain Furness, who came from her town and knew herself and the Lyndes. But that was all he said. And it did not seem strange to her that it was all.

Mrs. Lynde, meanwhile, continued to take her to task. "France thinks you are ill. But . . . My dear, if you would only tell things! — only take your friends into your confidence! But you never have. Of course if you don't *care* to . . . Don't you ever tell things even to France?"

"Perhaps I would," said Zandrie, "— if he ever asked questions."

Mrs. Lynde asked no more, perhaps because Royce's step was on the stairs. It was early in May, and so warm that the front door had been left open. He had telegraphed that he was coming "with some news,"

Zandrie was at the top of the stairs before he, and took his face between her hands. "You 're pale," she said.

"I 've been working rather extra hard."

"Yet I still believe that if I loved you, you 'd stop loving me!"

"Try it and see."

She kissed his forehead gravely. "Never!" But it was the first kiss she had given him of her own accord.

"You shall!" He caught her in his arms; and at first she neither answered nor resisted. But when

his clasp began to relax, "No,— hold me," she whispered, "I 'm safer so,— safe from the dream. The strength of your arms is good." Then, "Take me out with you," she said. "Have you time?"

"Time? — when you *want* me a little?" He laughed happily. "I 'd break an engagement with the archangel Mike, if you asked me to stay."

"That sounds like naughty me," she said. "Don't grow like me, France. It 's awful to be me."

"What did you mean by 'the dream' ?" he asked very gravely, when they had been walking a few minutes.

"Ah!" and she shivered. "The dream of dark water into which I 'm falling. It comes so often now, and the ghost of it haunts me through the day — some days. I can't explain — but of a sudden I see it — a dark, still pool — somewhere down below me. . . . Oh! — and I gasp and catch at something to keep from falling, and there 's nothing to catch; and then the pool itself is gone — everything gone but the terror."

He took her hand. "Dear,— you must n't!"

"I know it; it 's morbid of me. But I can't seem to fight it, even, any more."

He let go her hand. After a pause, "It isn't the Lyndes? — the trouble, I mean, that brings bad dreams? It isn't the absurd idea the Lyndes don't love you?"

"Mrs. Lynde does n't love me; and Poggy does n't



— " — she was going to say "does n't dare." But she said instead, " I almost think nobody truly loves me — not even you."

"And that 's the trouble?" He asked it as though he were thinking of something else; thinking very hard. " As though he were in a feud with himself," Zandrie thought. And then she remembered that she had said that of Julian.

As in the case of Julian and herself, the man's spiritual conflict — whatever it 's cause — broke the wires of understanding between them. A minute ago and the impulse to confide her trouble had been urgent. It had seemed as though it would be a relief to tell; and what harm to France, who knew already that she loved another better than him? — unless he had forgotten. She sometimes believed he had. What harm to remind him, though? Better so! But the impulse to tell him that the man she loved was his own friend Julian, who no longer loved her — the mood that had made the confidence seem easy, was now destroyed by France himself,— how or why, she could not say.

They walked in silence till he drew a letter from his pocket and gave it her to read. It was from his mother, telling that for a complication of reasons, his sister Alice was to be married on May twelfth instead of in June, and urging him to come to the wedding. If he sailed at once, he would be in time. Alice herself had added a sweet, importunate postscript.

" Are you going? " Zandrie asked.

He was watching her. "I came this morning to say good-by. I got the letter five days ago, but I did n't engage passage till yesterday. I 'm going to sail from Boston this afternoon at five. I 've cabled Mother to expect me."

"To be gone how long?"

"Six weeks, I think."

She felt the blood leave her lips. Suddenly she caught his arm. "France!"

"You don't want me to go?"

"I 'm afraid! Oh, you must n't leave me! It would n't be right."

He seized both her hands. "You don't mean —"

"No, no! I don't love you, France! But — don't leave me. Something will happen if you leave me alone — if you go so *far!* O France!"

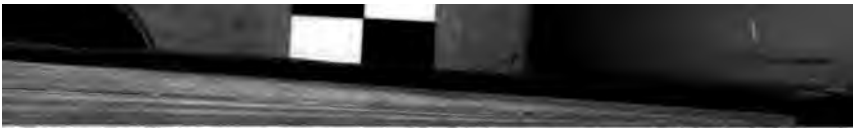
"Come with me! Why not! Why not marry me — to-day? Alex! I had n't dreamed of *that!* But why not?"

"O no! O no!" She shrank back from him. "Why did you think of going so far?"

"Alex, are you going to marry me ever? You *must* say. It 's only fair."

"Perhaps. I don't know. But you must n't go." She leaned against a fence and covered her face.

After a pause he bent over her. His voice shook. "I believe it 's now or never. Come with me, dear. You 'll be happier — away from the Lyndes. I 've *got* to go, this very afternoon. I was going back to



Boston in half an hour, but there 's a later train — twelve: twenty-five. It could be done before then, I think. Our marriage, I mean." He was so near that she heard his trembling. "Beloved! Try it! You 'll be happier — even with me. Try it. You were going to marry me any way. . . . It 's a double stateroom — the only one I could get. I 'm not superstitious, but — it 's all quite possible, you see. Come away, dear, from bad dreams — from all this miserable life!"

"But you 're not going — not really, France!"

"I 'm going this afternoon at five. And you 're coming with me."

"No," she whispered. "But if I don't — But if I don't —"

Suddenly she caught his coat with her left hand, covering her eyes with the other. "Take me away with you — somewhere — O yes, way off! — to Paris, I mean. Something will happen if you leave me all alone."

"You mean you 'll marry me?"

"Yes — yes . . . take me with you."

Although three persons were passing, Royce caught her in his arms, laughing softly. "We 've just two hours to get married in!"

They turned to go back to the Lyndes'. Zandrie was walking very fast. "Why were you going to leave me?" she asked.

"I thought it might be better. I could n't decide,

at first; but I thought if I went for a while . . . I had n't much hope, but — "

"You thought it might help me to know whether I really could live without you. Well,— I could n't, it seems. But perhaps I can't live with you either."

" Thank God, you 're willing to try."

" You 're the only one, you see, who loves me at all. And I . . . When one has no father nor mother, one dies without love."

It was half past ten and beginning to rain, when they reached the house. The Lyndes were out. After some sternly practical discussion concerning clothes and the necessity of buying a steamer-rug in Boston, France left his intended bride to pack a small trunk, while he rushed forth in search of Poggy, Mrs. Lynde, a clergyman, a license, and a ring. With the possible exception of the license, Mrs. Lynde was the least easily procured; but by dint of much telephoning and the exercise of a wit worthy of Sherlock Holmes, Poggy tracked her to a milliner's and ran her to cover on the steps of that establishment. When they reached home, it was ten minutes to twelve, and the minister already there.

The Doctor and his bride caught the twelve: twenty-five train by precisely three quarters of a minute.

CHAPTER XXIX

IN THE HOUR OF NEED

If the elderly couple in the dining car, who had nudged each other behind the backs of a younger couple, could have seen the bride an hour later, they might well have looked as puzzled as the bridegroom. He looked not only bewildered, but dismayed. For the bride lay huddled almost as far from him as space allowed in the carriage that was taking them from the Boston depot to the wharf. Her hands lay in her lap nerveless, and so cold that anxiety began to sharpen the lines of perplexity on her husband's forehead. He had laid one of his hands on hers, till she had drawn hers away. "I think I understand, dear," he said at last. "But you know what I — what we — "

She shrank yet farther from him. "I know you 're kind."

When he next spoke, the cheerfulness of his voice was purely professional. "The rain can't last much longer. It 'll use itself all up at this rate."

But she did not hear, because her mind was busy with other words, spoken between them on the train. She was trying to recall them calmly,— exactly.

"We've promised to live together,"— those were some of her own — "but why do married people have to make such a promise? It's only when men and women agree to live together, that they promise so; is n't it? And why? I never could see." And as he was silent, she had repeated very earnestly, "Why? Other friends don't promise so." And then he had turned to her with such a startled question in his eyes, that she leaped to a strange, frightened suspicion. "There's something I don't understand!" And at last he had said "Dear child! Dear child!" — as though appalled and full of compassion. Five minutes later, panic had fallen upon her.

He was bent upon diverting her now, on their way to the wharf; but it was not till his third attempt, that she heard his words. "Think of everybody's surprise! The family and Dr. Ward are the only ones who knew of so much as our engagement. That is . . . " He flushed. Then he sat a little straighter. "Yes,— who knew even of our engagement. When the wedding's announced, there'll be — "

Zandrie had clasped her hands tensely. "You told some one else. Whatever you do, France, don't lie to me, ever."

"Oh . . . well,— one or two friends, perhaps . . . I mean — yes, just recently. I knew I could depend on their — "

"Who was it?"



Something in her tone perhaps broke through his guard of feigned carelessness, for he did not speak again until she had repeated the question.

The stony, monotonous rattle of the cab ceased suddenly because of a block of vehicles ahead, and the manifold roar of the city surged into its place. It was like a change of mood from common-place to earnestly significant.

"The man I wrote you about, then," he answered at last. "You . . . knew it?"

"Tell me everything," Zandrie said in a voice that was slightly hoarse.

"I . . . had n't meant to speak of him."

"I know it. Now it will be better to, you see."

He was pale, and worked at the window strap. "Perhaps it will . . . Mrs. Lynde once told me about your leaving the convent and coming north to find a friend — a man who had been taken care of at the convent — a friend of the Lyndes, through whom they knew you. She told me his name. And she told me you had quarreled and seen nothing of him for some time . . . That was all she told me. But I suspected — could n't help it — that he — this friend — might . . . might be the one whom . . . "

But she gave him no help.

"I did n't *know,* of course," he went on. "I don't *know* now; though I . . . Well, I wanted to know from no one but yourself. And then he —

Furness — came to the hospital; and when I heard his name and where he 'd been living, and that he came originally from Maryland — then I was sure he was the friend, at least. He did n't invite familiarity, as I wrote — "

"You *wrote that letter,* knowing — "

"No! I had n't caught his name when Ward introduced him: thought it was Ferns. I did n't get it right or learn anything about him till after I 'd mailed the letter next morning. I 'd long since forgotten the name of the man I 'd heard play in Paris — if I ever knew it."

"Go on."

"Well . . . I told him I thought he knew the Lyndes and — you; and he said 'yes' and that he had n't seen Miss Lynde — he started to say 'Miss Donallon' — for some time; and then changed the subject. And then I wrote that second letter, because I thought if you cared to — to speak of him, it would give you the chance . . . And because you did n't, I did n't speak of him again. Mrs. Lynde asked me, two or three weeks ago, why I 'd told him of our engagement — he 'd spoken of it to her, it seems — I forgot to ask him not to — and she evidently wanted to talk. But I would n't — naturally."

"Go on."

"And — just because I suspected, I tried to keep away from him too. Any man in my place would. But circumstances kept forcing us together. He was



at the hospital three months or more. We got to be fairly good friends. But we did n't speak of you again till the night before he left. And then he asked suddenly how you were; and from something in his manner — I don't know what — or perhaps because I was on the look-out, however much against my will — I could n't help seeing he was more than ordinarily interested — though I 'd supposed from what you told me, that he did n't love you,— that that was the reason why . . . " He paused. "I told him you were n't very well."

"He must have guessed that already."

But France seemed not to hear that. "Then I told him of our engagement. I 'm not proud of myself for that. I just did it to — to make surer. And if he had n't had such a hell of a life, I 'd have been small enough to — "

"He knew it already."

"He knew — ? "

"He knew I was going to marry somebody. And he did n't care."

"And you — he . . My suspicions, then — "

"You did n't suspect. You knew he was — the Other One." There was a long pause. "I wrote him . . . You may as well know all the rest now — and forever. I came here to Boston to see him and you, the day I got your letter — when you went to the Lyndes' and could n't find me."

"I was n't in an enviable mood that day."

"I went to Boston to tell him about you, and you about him. And when I could n't see him, I wrote a note which . . . He would have answered it, if — if he had cared for me at all . . . Oh, give me time! . . .I wrote him I was engaged to — to some one I did n't love. But he never answered."

"He said he did n't know you were engaged."

"He did know. . . . He *said that?* . . . France!" She turned and seized his arm. "France! What makes you think he said such a thing? Oh, remember — carefully! — every word! I gave the note to his mother." Zandrie was trembling. "Quick! Remember what he said!"

"He said he 'd heard nothing about it — your engagement. He said what I told you,— 'I did n't know she was engaged to any one.' And I saw it was a shock, too — a bad one, I think. He turned white. And I was devil enough to — "

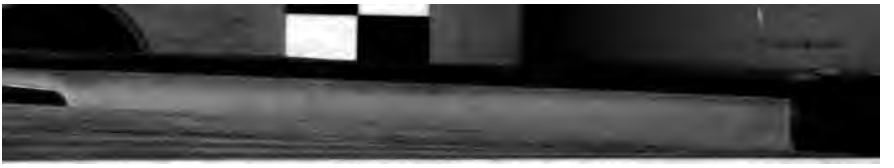
"I gave the note to his mother . . . But he could n't lie."

"He was n't lying."

After another long pause, "And God let me marry you. O Mother of Heaven!"

The cab had stopped again. They were at the wharf. France held out his hand to help her, but she avoided it. He looked rather as though he needed help himself.

Neither spoke to the other again till they were in their stateroom. It was very small in spite of its



two berths. At sight of it, Zandrie had clasped her hands against her throat.

"Would you rather go back to the Lyndes?" he asked.

"No."

"There may be another room — for you. There sometimes are rooms at the last moment. I 'll find out as soon as I get back." He had to return to Boston for several errands. He gave her seventy-five dollars, meanwhile. "That would get you to Paris in fine style, if anything — But nothing but loss of life or limb could detain me, you know. My business can't take more than an hour. Still, if you 're the least bit nervous —"

"I 'm not."

"You 'd rather stay here?"

"On deck," she said.

By the time that the deck steward had been found, and chairs engaged, France had to go. His eyes plead, but she had nothing to give. For many minutes after the steward had left her in her chair, wrapped in her husband's rug, she lay as still as though frozen.

In her first terror on the train, she had compelled France to tell her that marriage was a less simple relationship than she had supposed. And she was the more terrified now, perhaps, in that she was uncertain whether even yet she understood fully. But, although she recoiled from France because of what



she half knew, she hated him first of all as the emblem of her own undoing. Yes,— her own undoing, wrought by none but herself. And yet so easy for a God of mercy to have prevented. Rather, it seemed that some demon hungry for malice, had brought her to such woe, driving her to the madness of this marriage. Married forever! — to a man from whose touch she shrank, now that she guessed the meaning of marriage. Married, when the mere suspicion would surely have saved her. Why had Mrs. Lynde not guessed her convent ignorance? — not asked a question at the last moment, as a mother would surely have done? Then she remembered that the clergyman was already there and every one waiting, when Mrs. Lynde arrived. No, she was not to blame; only herself — Zandrie — and the malignant Power that led her to marry because of what had seemed proof that Julian no longer loved her,— when least suspicion of the validity of the evidence would have saved her.

Could she question its validity now? . . . But surely, Julian could not lie. . . . And why should he have lied to France? . . . And France *saw* that he loved her,— that the news of her engagement was a shock.

She sat up suddenly, as the full meaning of what France had said in the carriage, broke upon her. So he had thought, formerly, that Julian did not love her; thought that was what kept Julian and herself apart!



He had married her, knowing — or suspecting — he must have suspected — that she dreamed of dark waters because she believed that the man she loved did not love her. He had discovered that Julian was the man, and that Julian loved her; and yet he had married her without saying a word — without a single effort to help,— because he himself could not love her well enough to give her up. He had stolen her hope, with his eyes open. His love had failed at its first test. It was not till later that she could own that the test was hard. The thing he had failed to do,— that was the cause of her undoing, she said now. The sole cause. A greater hearted man could not have failed. "Traitor to Julian too," she whispered. And then she covered her eyes, to shut the sight of France from her mind.

Her note had not reached Julian. Oh no; of that there could be no doubt. His mother had lost it, perhaps. But had she not told him of Zandrie's visit? Could she have forgotten that? And if she had told, would he have written, if he . . . She struggled to think out all the possible results of her encounter with Mrs. Roswell; but her thought only sank into a whirlpool of incoherence,— whence somehow, at last, hope emerged. The sickness of certainty that Julian did not love her — that, at least, was gone.

She flung her wraps open and sprang up to give vent to the formless, surging hope that had like to burst her heart. Her feet carried her, she did not



know how, to the boat deck, where wind and rain beat unheeded on her face.

I believe that her last flight to Julian was resolved as innocently as the first, when she trudged with a little bundle of clothes under her arm, three miles from the convent to the hospital, to tell her Knight that she had come to stay. She had gone to him then as metal to its magnet, without debate of right or wrong, except for the question of what Sister Angela would say, and the exhilarating certainty that the nun would punish her if she could. She had gone to him to be saved. To whom else should she go? So now. And there was no conflict of conscience now, except for a moment, in the matter of leaving France after her vow to abide with him for better or for worse. But the fact that she had signed that contract ignorant of its terms, must absolve her in the eyes of God and of Julian. Knowledge of its terms had revealed this: that of all lives, married life with France was the least thinkable, the most impossible, the most revolting to every instinct. But the thought of return to the Lyndes held cruelly little welcome — was equally impossible. And so, from the intolerable impasse, she flew once more for help, to the one whom since childhood she had made the repository of all her confidence,— of the only vital faith her nature had yielded. For help — that was all — out of a misery that, like the water of her dream, snatched her feet



with a threat to suck her down to destruction. She would go to Julian to find whether he loved her still; and if he loved her, she would tell him all; and then, after that . . . All must be somehow well, if he loved her. And he would tell her how.

She had intended to leave a note for France, saying that she had decided not to go with him; but when she reached the writing room, it was a quarter after four, and she dared not stop. For, if he returned before she left the boat, he might insist upon taking her back to the Lyndes. To avoid all risk of hindrance, it would be better, since she could not write, that he should believe her on board till after the boat had sailed. So she left her suit-case in the state room, taking out only a few small things that could be wrapped in a piece of paper. Everything would point to her having gotten up from her steamer chair merely to wander about. On so large a boat, two persons might easily miss meeting one another for an hour; and without proof of her having gone ashore, he would not dare to let it sail without him. Her brain was very clear now, working readily for the first time in four months.

But although she left no note for France, she slipt her wedding ring under the lower berth in his room, where it would tell him, that night, all he need know for the present.



CHAPTER XXX

"NO PAST IS MINE; NO FUTURE"

The long journey was over, and with it, the rain. Out of the west, from under a sluice-gate of metal-gray, ribbed cloud, the sun rolled a tide of mellow light flushing the pools with liquid gold; and on the back of the tide, a warm west wind sang down the street, begging their golden drops from the sycamores and oaks, yet all so softly that robins and orioles almost drowned its voice.

It was a street of none but very old houses — this Marshall street — its dwellings hospitably ample though guarded by jealous, intertwining trees; gracious with vines and exquisite with the mezzotints of decay: at sunset, a street of remembered romance, dying passion, and half-realized dreams.

One old brick house, with its wide, welcoming veranda and vine-bound columns, so wrought its spell of reminiscent beauty that Zandrie lingered at its gate, watching where the sunset light filtered through between knotted ropes of wisteria and their burdens of blossoms, to warm the old, rose-red hearts of the bricks. It stood back from the street behind a cedar



hedge, flanked by undisciplined body-guards of beeches, sycamores, and sweeping pines, apple-trees clinging to their handfuls of late blossoms, lilacs loaded to bending, and brave camellias,— all a tangle of crimson, white, violet, and the whole gamut of greens. Somewhere, perhaps near, perhaps in the heart of some thicket far to the back where the ground fell to the level of a secret brook, a veery thrush twisted his mysterious spirals of song.

When Zandrie met a child whom she asked to point out the old Marshall house, and found it was Julian's gate at which she had lingered, the coincidence seemed a happy omen.

It was not till the cry of her name reached her that she saw him, because of a dizziness that blinded her at first, and because the long room between them was in twilight. He was at the piano, from whose shadow some one started up and stood curiously still while Zandrie crossed the room to Julian's side. He took both her hands and repeated her name, low, incredulously. His back was to the western windows, so that she still barely saw his face; but their hands clung together and she knew that there was no need of the question she had come to ask.

The figure at the farther end of the piano stirred at last. "Introduce us, laddie." It was the exquisite voice of Mrs. Roswell.

Julian started slightly and released Zandrie's hands.

"My mother, Mrs. Roswell — Miss Donallon — I mean Miss Lynde."

Mrs. Roswell laughed softly. "Is it too dark to see which?" She brought a chair and rang for a maid, chatting while a massive negress lighted candles and a lamp and peered curiously at the guest towards whose face her master's was turned so searchingly. But Zandrie did not look at him yet — not with others in the room.

Mrs. Roswell exclaimed when the candles on the piano were lighted. "Ah! I thought as much. We 've met before, Miss Lynde — or Miss Donallon? . . . at the hospital, was n't it? — Dr. Ward's, in Boston?" The voice was sweet with friendly surprise. "I hoped we 'd surely meet again. Indeed, I 'd have written if I 'd only known your name and address, but you told me only your first name, you know — and I forgot that. O careless me! But I forget everything! And that was a day of such anxiety. If you only knew —" Her voice was pleading now; her eyes sought Julian's. "If you knew, you 'd forgive me. Sonnie, I hardly dare confess! I did n't dare at the time. But it 's bound to come out,— that I lost that note. She came to the hospital, laddie, and left a note, the very day of your operation; and somehow or other it got mislaid. Everything was in such confusion — especially my poor wits. And then when I absolutely could n't



find it, nor remember her name — Zandrie, was it, that you called her just now? — well, then I was too ashamed. I knew you 'd be so disgusted with your poor, weak-minded mother. But I was sure she 'd write, or come again." Her eyes were wide with appeal. "I always do confess my sins in spite of myself!"

Her smile, if the tales of Marjorie Marshall are true, had bewitched many a man and woman too, before Zandrie, who, looking into her blue eyes, forgot distrust and laid forgiveness at her feet.

"And I came again." It was all she could find to say, because she was still trying not to look at Julian.

"I hoped for it," said Mrs. Roswell, "I 've felt so guilty; and besides . . . Ah Julian! — you rascal!" Her voice dropped to a tremulous violin-tone. "And I thought — poor, silly me! — that I knew so much about you."

He caught her hand almost roughly to push her away. "I must be alone with her," he said.

Her lips still smiled although they were pale.

His hands found Zandrie's again as each stared at the other in the candle-light. "What has happened?" he asked at last.

"Tell me," said Zandrie, "truthfully . . . " She thought he could read the question from her eyes.

Perhaps he did, for his own turned from her, and

his face grew pale. "You are engaged . . . to Royce."

"No. Don't speak of him *now*."

"You are n't . . . ?" He looked up with startled, shining eyes. "Not . . . ?"

"I hate him. I never loved him. I came to be saved from him." She knelt beside him as of old. "Do you love me? Answer!"

"You don't love Royce? You are n't . . . O my God!"

A minute later, "Ah!" she gasped, laughing softly, "you 're strong!" Then tears shut him from her sight and she huddled close, clinging with both hands, her face in the hollow of his shoulder, and sobbed till the steady strength of his clasp brought her peace. "You 'll not send me away again!" It was an ecstatic assertion — not a question.

He kissed her eyes. "Sometimes," he said, "I dared hope — for this. Sometimes — though seldom — till he told me, four weeks ago . . . and then —"

"You mean — if I 'd come before, you 'd have let me stay?" She challenged him with sudden, profound surprise.

"Lately, since the operation especially, I thought that if you loved me still — after you were all grown up . . . I did n't believe you would, quite, but if you did and ever came of your own free will,— I thought I 'd have more right —"



"I came. I came. . . ."

"You came to the hospital, my mother said — in the same way?"

"Yes And — O Julian! I'll try to forgive her for forgetting!"

"And I . . . Tell me about it."

But instead, "Do you love her very much?" she asked. "I did n't know you had a mother, till that day. That seems so strange still."

He was silent.

"I thought — You surely told me she was dead."

"And you don't know why? Mrs. Lynde never told you? That was good of her." He would not meet her eyes just then.

"Perhaps I understand, dear," she said at last. "You thought, because she married again and went away, she did n't love you."

"I think she did n't very much."

"I love you," Zandrie whispered.

"I forbade you to."

"It was arrogant — just like you, dear!" Then she caught his face between her hands and turned it to the light. "Yes! — yes. It 's Julian! . . . The past is a dream."

I think she believed that it was indeed.

He summoned Carter to carry him to a couch near an open window, through which the western breeze, sunk to a breath, drifted in, heavy with the fragrance of lilac. Zandrie crouched on cushions on the floor

beside him. He asked no questions. "I had to come," she whispered once of her own accord, and he seemed content. When she spoke of the languorous beauty of the old house and grounds, "Shall we stay, then?" he asked. But she would neither talk of the future herself nor let him. She was jealous, she said, for their first perfect hour; and it was true, though whatever fear she might have was not of the future itself, which had no meaning now, but of its claiming a meaning, perhaps at the fire of some word which might be the signal for fears to rush upon and rob her blissful hour. For her, time was become a star-lit river, flowing from bliss to nowhere but bliss again. "The past is a dream," she said once more. "And if there were a future, it could hold only you and me. It would be *this*."

Yet she led him to talk of his own past as though it were real: of his boyhood, before he went abroad; of old haunts and friends, including his first organ master, the Russian, who was actually an exile as gossip had it, though by no means a hurler of bombs; it was he who had played that night in the Catholic church, he said . . . But she would not speak of that evening yet. So he told of the somber evenings in his father's house, and the far from somber nights in his grandfather's, with the godless old man and his merry associates. He told all the best there was to tell of Colonel "Jehu"; but of his mother he spoke not at all, shrinking in his turn perhaps from what



might soil the beauty of the hour; and Zandrie was satisfied with her own account of his silence. But "I hardly believed good women were made," he said, "till I knew my aunt. I'm glad you don't know what a devil I was, the first few years after my mishap. But she made me ashamed. I wish she could have lived till you came."

Of herself, Zandrie would tell only how she believed she had lost the love of the Lyndes, partly through her own fault of silence, "and because I was as a thankless child," she said, "until it was too late." And then she told how she had followed him into the church. "And you did n't know it was I, until the last?" She rose to her knees and bent over him. "Julian! — did n't you love me at all, that night — enough to know when I was calling to you just to turn and save me?"

He caught her to him. "I never dreamed but that you were happier than I. Even at the last, when I saw you, I thought it was chance — that you 'd come to pray in the church, or to listen. If you had spoken — that night —"

"I was afraid," she said. "But I 'm saved now."

And as long as she touched him, she believed it. That certainty of his bodily presence, and the passionate delight of the certainty, left no room for fear. Nothing else had meaning.

At eleven o'clock Mrs. Roswell came into the room.

"I thought this hour would stay," Zandrie whispered.

"It 's coming again," he said, "ten thousand times, — and mornings too,— and afternoons! . . . Kiss me once more,— good-night."

"Not yet."

"Yes, for you 're tired. When you first came in, you looked almost ill, so that I was frightened. You 're tired from the long journey."

Mrs. Roswell was standing very still near the door.

"Mother," he said, "you 're forgiven! She 's come back. She 's come back! I have her! And George Deming 's coming over to marry us . . . when? — to-morrow? — Monday morning? A day and a half 's a long enough engagement, in all conscience! . . . Here, Mother — take her upstairs, quick! — if you can get her!" And he laughed softly as he caught her to him again and held her as though he would never let her go, crushing out the fear that had entered with that word, "marry"; kissing his own exultation into her.

Mrs. Roswell did not stir until Zandrie went to her and took her hand; and then there was no response but a smile of the lips that meant nothing — not love, at least. But a minute later, she was the gracious hostess, thoughtful for the comfort of her guest, whom she led to a room furnished with shining old mahogany,— the bed, a great four-poster, hos-



pitably opened, its linen and crisp hangings haunted with old garden perfumes. Maryland biscuit and a glass of wine stood with the candles on a table beside it. "Ring for your breakfast whenever you choose," she said. "We lazy southerners sleep till when we please and breakfast in our rooms."

So she played the part of gracious hostess, mistress of herself until she bade her guest good-night and reached the door. But there she fumbled for the knob, and let it go when found, and wheeled about, her shadow on the wall trembling. The sweetness went from her voice, leaving it a little hoarse. "Is it true — what he said — that you 're going to marry him?"

"Yes," Zandrie answered, and believed it; for, though removed from the contagion of Julian's own blind joy, a new thought had come to feed hers. The thought of divorce. There was an institution called divorce, by which marriages were somehow cancelled, vows abrogated. She knew little about it; had thought little about it, till of a sudden it was the pivotal interest of her life.

Julian's mother took a step nearer and then stood trembling. "You 're taking all I have left. I 'd almost won him — almost! And I 'll win yet. Have you broken your word to Dr. Royce? Or did he jilt you? . . . Julian has more money, to be sure. But have you thought of the life here? — have you thought of that? Do you suppose people will call on you much more than me? For he really is my son,

you see — I reckon you believe he 's got a mother, at last — and I 'm in the house. I 've been here four weeks and no one has called yet,— but little Gray Summers. Do you suppose you 'll be recognized either? To be sure, Gray Summers Deming may ask you to a quiet little family supper; but that 's because she 's George Deming's — a minister's wife, and an opposite neighbor, and kind to all deserving people, whether their connections are strictly respectable or not. Delightful diversion — little Gray's family suppers! Oh yes, and some of Julian's men friends, maybe, will drop in to smoke with him even after he 's got a wife. But for the rest — have you really thought? — day after day in this house, alone with a crippled man and me. And there 'll be little love lost between you and me — I can promise that — if I lose him through you. I tell you, if I lose him, you shall lose him too — O yes you shall! — if he does n't tire of you anyhow without my help." She stopped, while her eyes looked Zandrie over from head to foot. Her own face was almost beautiful still, in spite of its passion of hate. "You! . . . My lips are as red as yours, I reckon. You 're pale! You look starved — sick! What 's been happening? Your Doctor tired of you so soon? Doctors want a rest from their practice, to be sure, when they come home. All men want happy, well fed women. And Julian 's a man, you know, if he is a cripple. He has senses. And he 's a Marshall, too. He could have done what



he chose with women; they 're mad about him — those who meet him — even now. And he knows his own power — be sure of that! And when he 's done with you . . . Unless your skill —" She laughed. "Marry him, dear! Marry him. I 'm not afraid. Your day will be short and none too joyful."

For a full minute after the door had closed, Zandrie leaned against a carved post of the bed, her hands at her ears because the voice seemed to assail them still. Yet she was too tired to understand more now than that she was hated by Julian's mother. Most of the words were forgotten already. She was too tired to be frightened or even unhappy, or to seek out Julian for the reassuring touch of his hand. The knowledge that he was within reach to-night and forever — that was enough now. And as soon as she lay in the great bed, sleep drowned her, body and soul, in fathomless peace.



CHAPTER XXXI

THE LAST JOUST

The negress who brought her breakfast at half past ten was bubbling with sly chuckles. "You 've 'cumulated more 'n yo' beauty sleep, an' yo' young man — he 's gettin' uneasy about you' not gettin' within hand-reach yet. Who you s'pose, now, devised on the idea of that effulgious bouquet?" She pointed eloquently to some wood-violets on the tray.

There was a note too, in a sealed envelope; but when Zandrie took it up, the happiness to which she had waked met its first check, for the writing was not Julian's.

"Zandrie," she read, "I am on my knees to you. You could be jealous yourself, though, for the man you love, and suppose he were all you had to love or to love you, and that after you had been cruelly separated from him for years, you thought you had him safe again for the rest of your life. And then suppose that another woman dropped from the sky into his very arms, and he and she just turned to you and said 'You may go now.' You are generous and good although you are happy. If Julian knew how



I spoke to you last night he could never forgive me, but you will and I think he won't know till I myself confess, as I shall some miserable day of course. I am very miserable, Zandrie, but you will be kind to me?

"MARJORIE ROSWELL."

Zandrie kissed the signature. What was there to forgive but some poor, foolish words wrung out of jealousy? Of course she would not tell Julian the few she remembered — though she would keep from him nothing else in the world. She would tell him about France. . . . Well, she would not kiss him till she had told. But the idea of telling him held no terror, for even if fear seized her while she spoke, he would hold her close and show her the way to the Land of Heart's Desire.

And their day began with laughter, when she found him in the long west room, alone, seated on the sill of a window that opened to the fragrant, sunshot garden, and she gave him both her hands,— but nothing more at first, according to her promise. "Not yet," she said, breathing fast as his hold of her hands tightened, and his eyes laughed at denial. "No! — no! — I made a promise."

But it was broken. Well, she had broken other promises and no harm had come yet. She could afford to break yet more — for this.

A minute later she took his face between her hands.



"It 's almost the same as when I saw it first — when I sat on the convent wall and you galloped past."

"And I put you on the saddle before me, did n't I? — and we galloped through ten years — to this? Well, we 're here! What does it matter, the way we came?"

"What does it matter," she repeated. "Remember you said that." But she shied away from the question in his eyes, as from whatever might carry her out of the enchanted present.

He took her hands again. "Listen, what an old sport I am! I came here from the piano all alone — well, with crutches of course, but wholly without Carter except that he sort of started me. I reckon I made the trip in less than three minutes." He launched this boast with the glee of a boy who has broken a record.

"And you can play."

"Some. Not much man's-size music, but — But I bet I could ride now if they 'd tie me on! I can drive, anyhow. Will you go driving with me? We 'll drive all over the map. And maybe I 'll let you ride with Mother — she 's off riding now — if you 're right careful when roads are icy. Mother 's a wonder at it. Over fifty, and a seat in the saddle 'most as good as her son's in his day. . . . What 's the matter?"

She smiled through tears. "Nothing . . . nothing but just brave you."

"Me! Crying over me! . . . because I 'm so



happy, the gods would destroy me right quick if they heard about it?" He laughed and crushed her to him. "What more do I want! . . . Don't leave me again — that's all. When 'll you marry me? This afternoon? The Reverend George Deming —"

But she put a hand over his mouth. "You asked what more you could want than this."

"But *this* means —"

"Not yet!" and she twisted away as far as his grasp of one of her wrists would allow, to pick up a book that he had dropped as she came in. "'Cyrano de Bergerac'," she read, to change the talk. "Poor, brave Cyrano — how I've cried over him!"

"I never cried over him."

"You're making fun of me. I always cry over very brave men who lose everything."

He admitted that Cyrano had a hard time. "But he did n't lose everything, you know, after all — not what he probably cared about most of all."

"He lost Roxane!"

Julian was turning the pages. "Remember the ending?"

She looked over his shoulder and read aloud:

"'Que dites-vous? . . . C'est inutile? . . . Je le sais!
Mais on ne se bat pas dans l'espoir du succès!
Non! non! c'est bien plus beau lorsque c'est inutile!
. . . . . .



— Je sais bien qu' à la fin vous me mettrez à bas;
N' importe: je me bats! je me bats! je me bats!
Oui, vous m'arrachez tout, le laurier et la rose!
Arrachez! Il y a malgré vous quelque chose
Que j' emporte, et ce soir, quand j' entrerai chez Dieu,
Mon salut balaiera largement le seuil bleu,
Quelque chose que sans un plis, sans une tache,
J' emporte malgré vous, et c' est. . . .
(Roxane) C' est? . . .
(Cyrano) Mon panache!'"

"His 'panache'," she pouted. "What did he mean? I never liked that, because I never knew what it could mean. You don't think he cared most for his stupid 'panache'? — most of all for that! — more than for Roxane?"

"His honor, does n't it mean?"

"Oh . . . But what of that?"

He tossed the book on the sill and caught her in his arms, laughing.

"You would have cared most for it then, like Cyrano?" she said, "— more than for me?"

"Jealous?" he mocked, "— but *you are my panache!*"

Yet, though she could hardly have told why, she was not satisfied.

But when they went into the garden, under the falling petals of apple-blossoms, enchanted peace wrapped her about once more. Cedars and lilacs shut them in a magic ring; the world was a thousand leagues



away — so they believed, till it sent a messenger through the færy garrison of trees.

It was a little girl with a close-cropped head and defiant eyes that examined Zandrie with unwavering interest; Louie Deming, from over the way, Julian explained without enthusiasm. "Got whooping-cough," she announced joyously. "Whooped twice yesterday. Lots of fun. Don't have to go to Sunday-school. Do anything I please."

But her pleasure at the moment was to climb an apple-tree, from which she fell.

One of her wrists was ominously swollen, and there was nothing for it but that Zandrie should take her home. And then, both the Reverend George Deming and his wife being out, she had to stay with the sobbing youngster while the only servant in the house went for the doctor; so that, though she kissed and soothed, she all but hated the little breaker of the morning's spell. And when she could go back to look for it at last, Marjorie Marshall was there in its place.

Her greeting was a pretty, appealing little smile, and out-stretched hands which Zandrie caught up to her lips in token of understanding and forgiveness. "How is the poor little sprained arm?" Mrs. Roswell asked. "How nice of you to stay with her. A hurt child is absolutely more than I can bear. Sonnie must inherit his mother's tender-heartedness; he has n't smiled once since Louie's fall."



And it was true that the gaiety which, an hour since, had almost wiped the lines from his face, was gone, though Zandrie had believed that, like her own happiness, it had come to stay. A vague fear shot at her own. "Look at me," she whispered, raising his face by a hand under his chain. "Louie's arm hurt, of course, but . . . do you think it did n't hurt more — what you did to me two years ago? — when you sent me away?" She winced at sight of the lines that deepened about his eyes, but fear egged her on. "It was a grievous mistake."

"Forgive me," he said.

"We 'll justify it somehow."

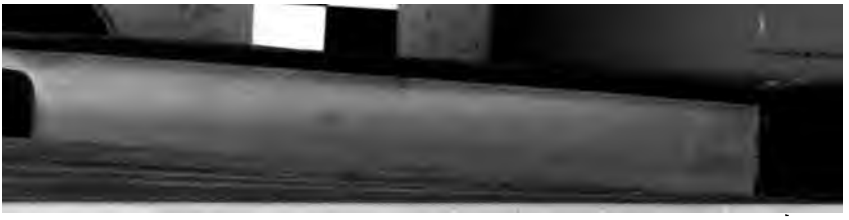
"You 're generous."

"I can afford to be . . . now." She stood beside him, looking down at his bent head. "Now," she repeated, touching his hair.

When she turned, Mrs. Roswell was stripping the green from a twig of cedar, and her hands were trembling. But during dinner, which was brought out to them, she was so delightfully merry that, if Mrs. Deming senior ever insisted that Marjorie Marshall charmed only with her comeliness of body, it must be that she never dined with her under a May sky, to an orchestra of orioles and bees.

They were not alone together again — Zandrie and Julian — till a shower had sent them in; and then, "Your mother 's very beautiful," Zandrie said.

He agreed with a yes that sounded almost grudg-



ing. "So beautiful," he added after a pause, "that — that it 's hard to believe . . ."

"Believe what?"

"Something it 's right hard to tell you." He looked as though it were hard. "But I 've got to, since the Lyndes did n't. They must be good friends of mine. . . . But now I want to get it over and done with. It 's your right to know now. But I 'm sorry. . . . She — my mother —" — he gripped the arms of his chair —" when all 's said and done, she *is* — my mother, and it 's hard to judge her. Circumstances were against her too, instead of ever helping — as they helped me. I might have been much worse — might have gone to the devil entirely, maybe, if — if I had n't been prevented, you see." He flushed to his forehead and locked his hands together. "I 'll tell you about myself too. I — I almost let you come in, that night at Mrs. Bright's . . . *you!* But I had n't begun to love you then. . . . But even before loving you — even in Paris I used to try, sometimes with all my might, to be — good. And when I failed — when the bad in me won out — I was ashamed, always. I want you to know that; that I 'd known what it was to be mortally ashamed — even before you came. For it 's only because of that — because I 've fought myself and been ashamed, that I 've any right at all to judge — *her.* It 's not really worse, of course, for a woman to be bad, than for a man — if they both care about good-



ness and honor enough to make themselves better. If she were honestly ashamed . . . if she 'd ever really cared . . ."

Zandrie's hands were clasped against her throat, but only because he was in a distress from which she could see no way to help him yet. His words so far had meant little more to her than that he was acutely unhappy. "I know," she said, "that your mother left you when your father died, and married; but —"

"I was nineteen when my father died. She left him when I was a baby — and took me with her, though Father and the law made her give me back. She left him for another man."

"Oh! . . ."

"You understand . . . You see now why I would n't have her touch you, if I could help it. She is . . . not good."

"Because she loved another man better than her husband? You don't mean —"

"And went to him — left her husband, and — and never really —"

"You mean you think that was so very dreadful?" She had risen and gripped the back of his chair.

He looked up and then reached for one of her hands. "Dear heart! — it 's a shock. I should have told you better, but I did n't know how. . . . It's hard to believe she is n't what she seems. She 's so beautiful. But — you understand now why I never spoke of her. She wrecked my father's life. Peo-



ple thought it hard of him not to divorce her, but they did n't know . . . It was n't revenge. He did n't believe in divorce in such a case; and I think he was right. But anyhow,— the only times he spoke of her, it was as though she were dead. And when she came to me . . . she came to my aunt's to see me, after my mishap,— and I was n't kind. I could n't be. It seemed like disloyalty to my father, to be good to her. She spoiled his life. But she 'd always kept track of me through Aunt Emily, and even came again when my aunt died, and cried — on her knees; — but Roswell's successor was living then, so she did n't need me. But now she 's alone and almost friendless. Heaven knows why she wanted to come back here where people won't even bow to her. It was n't bravado exactly, but . . . Well, I could n't refuse her, dear. And it seemed easy enough till you came. But now —"

"Oh, it was right to let her come back! . . . right and merciful."

"Yes,— right. But you can understand how I feel about you . . . how it hurts to see her touch you,— to think what you must suffer because of her, if you marry me. Yet I think you will marry me —"

She caught her hand wildly from his. "Julian! Speak plainly! — simply! I can't see! Was that *all* — just to leave her husband for the man she loved?"

His surprise answered her so that she covered her



eyes. "And you shudder from her still for that? — just for that?"

He laid his hand on her arm.

"So dreadful? . . . because she . . . Is that always so wicked? *Bad?* She 's a *bad* woman just for that? O no! — don't answer. I could n't live." She clasped her hands and bent till her face was hidden against his shoulder. "Julian! Be merciful to me! — me too! Don't send me away!" She slipped to her knees. "I came to be saved. I never loved any one but you. He knew I did n't love him when he married me. I thought . . . I did n't know you loved me still. I thought you did n't, because of that note —"

He had gripped her shoulder, pushing her away till he could see her face. His own was gray. "*Married?*"

"Ah Julian!"

"What do you mean?"

"Be merciful! I did n't know . . . I could-n't stay with him."

"You 're *married?*"

"Only two days!"

"To Royce?"

"Yes."

He lay back in his chair, motionless but for a twitching of the lips, till some one knocked at the door. "Get up," he said, and she obeyed and was



standing when a servant entered with afternoon tea.

"Mis' Roswell say she 's comin' presently, and makes request —"— the negress stopped in the act of putting down the tray. "Lord' sake, Mis' Julian! looks like you need somethin' mo' powerful than tea, yo'self."

"Ask Mrs. Roswell," he said, "— tell her we —"

But she herself was entering the room. The negress set the tray on a table and puttered over the arrangement of the cups, eyeing Julian with mysterious grimaces till her mistress stopped chatting, to dismiss her.

But when the servant was gone, Marjorie Marshall chatted on. If she saw her son's white face, by which one read a despair that seemed like to throttle whatever remained of the joy of life, or if she saw the misery of a terrified child, she made no sign that she had seen, unless in her dismissal of the servant. She invited Zandrie to sit by the table, and gave her a cup that Zandrie had to take with both hands. But when Julian refused tea, "What 's the matter with you?" she asked, "— have you quarreled already, then?"

He raised his head slowly, looking at her as though he understood only the tone of the question. "No." And then, "When you 've finished your tea please leave us. Forgive me. We — have had some bad news."

Mrs. Roswell did not finish her tea; and the rustle



of her skirts as she went out, murmured of assaulted vanity.

"Tell me," he said, staring at the door that his mother had closed behind her.

Zandrie shivered. The few feet of polished floor between them had become a chasm. She clung to the back of a chair — not his. "Be merciful," she whispered across the chasm.

"Why did you come?"

"I did n't know — I did n't know what marriage was, until . . ." Her voice trailed off into a moan that broke into a convulsion of sobs. When they had quieted so that the sound of his voice speaking her name could reach her, she groped her way to him and he took her hand. "We must n't be children," he said, brushing tears from his own cheeks. "We must talk it over — and understand."

"It was because you did n't get my note. I thought you did n't love me; and France did. So it seemed right to marry him, till he told me . . ." She drew her hand from his. "Did your father or mother tell you — what marriage means? No one told me — till we were on the train, France and I. After the wedding."

She told him how it had come about, but brokenly, by degrees.

"You gave the note to my mother," he asked, "— *unsealed?*" And in the silence that followed her assent, the old lines of bodily pain grew sharply dis-



tinct, and a flush of savage anger swept over his face. Zandrie suddenly understood, and the ugly suspicion locked her own teeth, like his, against words that neither might speak in the other's hearing.

After she had finished her story, she knelt with her hands clasped on the arm of his chair; but he neither looked at her nor touched her.

"I can save your honor," he said at last. "But you must help. . . . You 'll go back to the Lyndes first."

"Never that!"

"Until you and — your husband — can arrange about your future."

"And then?"

"Then God help us all."

"There is divorce," she whispered.

"Divorce. Yes; my mother wanted divorce. My mother! . . . I don't know the law about it, but . . . *You!* . . . O my God!" His voice fell, and terror tied her own. "I can save your honor," he said again. "My right to say I love you is gone, but I can prove it that way at least."

"You care more for honor than for me."

"They 're the same, are n't they?"

After a pause, "If they 're not," she said, "is poor honor worth the saving?"

Incredulous questioning came to his eyes. "Are you a child still, then? I believe in you so much that . . . I believe you 're a child."



"No! . . . no."

"That you don't understand what you 're saying."

"I only understand that I want you . . . you. To stay with you!" Her hands shot out to him, but although he snatched them, he held her off. After a pause in which her eyes fell before the searching in his, "Try to understand," he said, "what your staying would mean."

"Yes . . . O yes! That 's why I came."

"Try to understand. It would be wrong — a great wrong — to yourself as well as others."

"France is the only one. And he married me, knowing I thought you did n't love me,— and he knew you did. My heart is dead when it thinks of him. . . . And I don't care for my broken vow. I made it in the dark. . . . Ah Julian! — you can't care about that! Why should you care about such things?"

"Your honor? . . ."

"About honor and — and wrong. Oh, I used to care about such things once . . . sometimes, but not much, and only for your sake — never for those things in themselves. I told you once, I 'd be wicked without you. But with you . . . by staying with you I may be good at last; who knows? You 're all the conscience I ever had, I think. . . . And I *must* stay."

He turned his face away and did not speak for a minute or two. "My mother —" he began, but his



voice broke so that he stopped again. Then, "Do you think my mother is happy? . . . If I let you stay. . . . If you stayed, and understood what your staying meant — as you would at last — you'd understand this too,— that I'd wronged you beyond any reparation. It could n't be undone. And you'd ask how I had the heart to rob you of your last chance for happiness . . . to steal your honor. Yes; and your faith in me would be gone, and you'd loathe me at last. And so . . . O my God! After last night! After last night . . ." He caught her hands up against his breast and bent forward suddenly with closed eyes, shaken as though by bodily anguish. The blow of her confession had fallen before he could arm himself as he had had time to do when their wills met two years before; and by that last cry she knew it, and her terror fell away.

"Julian! Julian! . . . Listen, Julian. You sent me away before, and it was a grievous mistake. We'll justify it yet, but it was a terrible mistake."

"My fault," he sobbed. "My fault. My fault."

"And you were so sure. . . . Do you dare be sure again? . . . Oh, if there's a God that cares! . . . he made us for one another. He'll see that we do no harm — you and I. What wrong that we live under one roof? — in one garden — for each other's happiness? — where no one can see? . . . Feel me, Julian! I'm here! — here! God



showed me the way. But what does it matter — the way we came? you said. O I was frightened! But see! I have you, touch you, feel your heartbeats, know your voice will feed my ears when they starve. And I 'll answer when you call. Think! — how you called me in the echoing, empty nights, and there was no answer. Think how you were alone with the misery of your own making and the tears you were ashamed of because you were a man. They scorched your eyelids and the sobs hurt. O beloved, how they hurt, body and soul! You 'd have sold your soul for a touch of Zandrie's hand. You groped in the dark and there was no comfort. . . . And then of a sudden — *this!* Zandrie's head on your breast, and her arms . . . so!"

The pain of his clasp was ecstacy wherein she would fain have stayed; but even his voice was slipping from her, and the darkness with which she fought was stronger than she.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE WHITE PLUME

She believed that she had won. She believed it remembering the clasp of his arms in which she had fainted, but, better still, the look in his eyes when hers had opened and found him by the couch where she had been laid, leaning towards her across an arm of his chair. For there was no accusation in that look; no questioning nor incredulous wonder, nor high will; but only concern and yearning tenderness that changed through the gladness of relief to the electric joy of answered passion. That was the last she had seen, because other persons had come between, one holding wine to her lips, another fanning, while a voice that for all its greatness seemed to come from afar over the sound of rushing waters, issued commands. "No, young woman; you don't sit up yet, or there 'll be another scene." The order was superfluous with Dr. Summers's hand against her shoulder. Then a form still more massive than the old doctor's lifted her in its arms, its forehead crimson and perspiring, though not with the physical difficulties of its task; for it was Carter.



She lay on the four-post bed now in the twilight, as happy, almost, as when she woke that morning in the belief that Julian would let her stay. For she believed it still. She believed that in their struggle she had prevailed, so working upon his pity as well as passion, that he could not let her go. If he grieved for the pain of a child whom he loved not at all, strange if he had no pity for Zandrie's tears!

She had said when they talked of honor and right, that for "those things in themselves" she had little concern; that he was her only conscience. And perhaps it was true; for in all her life her motives were made of loves and hates. Love of her volatile, indulgent father, love of the Virgin, and of Sister Isidore and Sister Andrea; love of the Julian of her dreams,— they had all served as the reasons for her acts. The more ardent the love, the more possible to choose a difficult course that she thought would be the choice of her beloved. So in her ethical decisions of the last two years, 'right' meant only what she believed Julian would approve if he knew, or else what would be for his welfare. Other 'right' had no meaning, no claim on her attention. She understood it not at all, for the simple reason that gray-clad abstractions never got beyond the antechamber of her thought. What chance had they, sober Puritans, to win notice at a court where most went clad in the hues of the passion-flower?

But within a few hours, even the thought of what

Julian himself called 'wrong' had grown so dull beside the rainbow-hued giant of joy in his bodily nearness — even that thought could win small notice now.

In spite of Dr. Summers's command to go to sleep, she had not undressed, expecting that the curious weakness which followed her still more unaccountable fainting would leave her soon so that she might go down stairs to Julian. For with all her belief in her ultimate victory, she knew that only the spell of her bodily presence could win over those well-drilled ranks of thought and feeling which she saw in him without comprehension but with none the less dread. Every moment that he was alone with them held danger for her. Yet the stars had begun to swim out of the dusk, and she still lay in a tingling weakness from which she had not the will to free herself.

She had lain in the starlight but half an hour, she thought, when the knob of her door was quietly turned. "I am awake," she said, seeing the silhouette of Julian's mother against the light of the hall.

Mrs. Roswell shut the door and crossed the room to an open window, where she stood twisting a corner of the curtain for several minutes before she spoke. Marjorie Marshall could speak to the point, when she chose. "He says he has lost you through me. Is it true?"

"Because of the note you —"

"Is it true?" she interrupted. "You 're married



already,— but is it true that he has lost you?" She came to the bed and leaned over so close that Zandrie felt her breath. "He tried to explain that you were so immeasurably innocent. But why did you come, if you 're going back? *Are you going back?*"

Zandrie's hands shot out to her. "Oh, it was cruel! . . . whether you only lost it, or — the other way. Surely . . . surely that was enough. Remember your own unhappiness and be kind at last! Don't take part against me. How could my staying cut off the love he gives you already? How could it, when he has loved me all along? I shan't come between him and you."

Mrs. Roswell pulled away from the supplicating hands with a short, low laugh. "I 'd like — But he 'll know soon enough — if he does n't know it already — that you 're not so different from . . . most of us. Oh, but I wish you joy of him when he knows!" After a pause, "He was like his father to-night. I 've seen it before; but to-night I could hate him. . . . I wish I could! . . . His father could n't have *said* such things. He could n't kill — like Julian. Oh! . . ." A sob shook her from head to foot.

Zandrie was at her side, her arms about her. "He 'll forgive you if — if you 'll be my friend. It 's all past — the trouble about the note. All trouble past! We 'll forget everything but the happiness to come."

The other thrust her away. "What makes you think you can stay? — that he 'll *let* you stay?"

"I think he will."

"Why?"

"I think he can't let me go."

"You little fool! . . . You little fool! . . . And if you did succeed in the end — Well, we 'd have each other to fall back on then — you and I! When he chose to speak to you as he spoke to me this evening — to insult you . . . you 'd have my sympathy at least. Oh, but wait! . . . If he let you stay — if he could n't let you go . . ." She caught her breath and, after a pause, laughed again the short, low laugh. Then she seized Zandrie's arm in a grip that hurt. "Zandrie! — stay! . . . stay! Make him keep you, somehow. Make him! . . . I love him so! I want more than just his little, indulgent love. Don't you see? We 'd be equals — we three — if his own honor . . . Oh, his precious honor! Why, he was n't born for a saint any more than the rest of us,— not much! He said as much himself, this very night. But he believes — some stuff about having won back whatever he once lost. Too bad women can't do that way! . . . Zandrie! — you understand! I 'll help you if you stay. And I 'll make amends,— you 'll see."

Yes; Zandrie understood. Julian's mother was right in that, though she could hardly guess how vital, new, and illuminating that understanding was. The



flash of it stunned her senses so that she heard nothing more of what the other said.

At first it was scarcely more than the slimy ugliness suddenly uncovered to her eyes, that sickened her; till the full length of its meaning and implications had crawled by inches into her understanding; and when it was all there, she fell on her knees and wept for loathing and shame.

"Julian!" she moaned later. "Forgive! . . . forgive."

Out of the sickness of repulsion from the poisonous thing she had seen, she passed to a passion of pity that its coils should lie where Julian must see them too, even in that path of his life which should have been most fair; and from compassion she rose into a clear, still air where all things that concerned herself and him stood sharply outlined in the burning light. And first, she saw herself as a beggar with bandaged eyes, and hands stretched out for none but their own needs. Unbelievable blindness, that had shut out the most salient — the supremely significant fact of all — that Julian's honor was bound with hers! She knew enough now of the world to know that. Yet till this hour the knowledge had lain in some corner of her mind, drugged, dormant, unnoticed, ineffective.

In all his pleading for her honor, he had not once plead for his own — the plume whose whiteness he rejoiced, like Cyrano, to carry with him from the ruin of his life —" what Cyrano cared most for after

all," he had said; and he could not have said it unless knowing the gladness of that pride. Even his mother could know that he had that! And stripped of his white plume, what had he left? What had she — Zandrie — to give in its place, but knowledge that the woman he loved was content to despoil him? And scarcely less bitter for him would be the knowledge that she was less than he had thought; one whom other women had a right to insult, if they did not choose rather to pass her by in silence. Sublime, mistaken generosity! . . . mistaken as the generosity that had refused the first gift of herself.

She forgot now that she had believed he was going to let her stay; or if the thought entered, it was shorn of significance by the great company into which it strayed. So too his mother's half-charges, and his own fragmentary confession that had had little meaning for her even while he spoke. But the incident of the breakfast at Mrs. Bright's took meaning suddenly; and because its insult reached through herself to him, she writhed. But only because it reached to him; for personal pride, that had leapt up after the lightning-bolt by which she saw another's soiled soul and knew her own to be white by contrast — that pride had soon burnt out. In this, the supreme hour of her life, self as well as self's desires sank molten in the blaze of her new vision.

And so, when she rose to go in the spreading dawn, the will to leave him to his white plume had grown



up knowing nothing of conflict, as a flower in the sun.

She stole on tiptoe to where he lay asleep. His left arm, flung back over his head, disordered his hair, which in the wan light looked gray, so that she had to bend close to make sure that it was not. But his face was gray, except for his lips and the shadows below his eyes. She studied it line by line, long, and as one who has the right; and at last she smoothed the hair back from his forehead. When he opened his eyes, she knelt by him. "Remember," she said, "that I went of my own will — remember that! — because I worshipped you. I 'm going out into the darkness. I don't know where it leads, but if there is light, it will be somehow where you are. It has always been so. . . . Julian — say my name."

He said it, but she saw that he scarcely comprehended yet. "Kiss me," she said. "It can do no harm. I 'm strong now."

When she knelt powerless against the strength of his arms, "I 'm faint," she whispered at last; and at that his clasp relaxed a little, so that she could slip suddenly down and out of reach.

He called her name once and again, and the last time it was like a cry, but she did not answer, except to turn on the threshold for a final look.

How long she had sat in the waiting room of the station, she neither knew nor cared, nor whether trains

had come or gone; for where should she go after all on any train? For what was she waiting?

After the breathless rush of resolve that had caught her up out of reach of clutching desires had dropped her back into the flesh; after the exaltation was gone and a mortal weariness in its place, from which, looking out on her life, she saw it barren even of hope, a wilderness without a pillar of cloud, wherein she could see no foothold for herself,— then she had asked for what was she waiting? What was there in all the darkness ahead to wait for? For, looking back, she saw that in the two years of her passion and privation of what she called life itself, she had lived on hope and the will to pay a debt; and at the last, she was Julian's debtor no longer. She saw that too; that her own sacrifice had cleared the score. Unless . . . She sat up suddenly. *Unless he was her debtor now.* For after all, had she not left him without proof that he had refused to keep her? No longer ago than last night she had believed that he would; that she had prevailed; which would have meant that she was stronger at last than he whom she had called her conscience. He had been more than her conscience, however: she saw that too — that he had been the only real god of her worship.

When she had left him, she had been at pains to tell him that she went of her own accord. She had been quite sure of course that he would have compelled her to go, had she tried to stay; but she had wished him to



know that she went of her own will, because she thought that the knowledge would please him. Yet he had tried to call her back. Was it possible that at last he prized her living presence above the plume whose whiteness she had been at such pains to help him save? Would he take her back? . . .

Yet she did not start up to find out. That was the curious fact, whose significance yet found no place among her jostling thoughts,— the fact that although her heart beat wildly, it was not with hope, but a new, strange fear lest she might have her heart's desire after all; fear lest the great act of her life might be a mocking act of blindness by proving Julian to be less than she had believed.

"Not that!" she whispered. "Never that!" And she pleaded with her doubt, saying that he had loved honor and "goodness" so well that she had asked why. Had he answered? She could not remember; but it seemed now that when she had stood on her pinnacle that morning, seeing things not glimpsed before, the light had streamed from some near source of ecstacy. The throne of God? She had not looked to see, content with the new bliss of the light itself.

God! . . . Julian had known where to find Him perhaps, for he had called out of his grief on God's name. Had the nuns known where? In those days she had not needed to ask them; and she had not asked Julian, because he himself had filled all her need.



If he took her back, would he fill it still? Compared with her present need, all past hunger of soul was a shrunken trifle. Yet if he took her back, loving her more than what he himself called goodness — if he took her back so, would he satisfy still?

Poor, puzzled child! The question itself was the core of her despair; but if it was also, by that same fact, the birth of her soul, how was she to know? The strain of the unhappy months had done its work on her body at last, and from the stress of troubling questions she slipped into unconsciousness, fainting quietly there where she had sat for two hours with her hands clasped under her chin.



CHAPTER XXXIII

THE GARDEN OF LOST DELIGHT

One day somebody woke from a sleep full of dreams, and seeing shadows on the wall, did not know what they were. A confused something was in the air. It was sound; but the listener could not remember what sound was,— neither its name, nor how it differed from shadow. At the next awakening, however, a tiny thrill of pleasure ran through the tired brain as it knew and named both shadows and sound. But what — who — was the somebody who had waked and now lay still, yet struggling — oh, struggling very hard with something? That was harder to tell. But when the dreamer woke for the third time, the awakening brought the peace of a struggle ended; and if questions came, their answers often slipped in at their side, so that it became a game to watch them. "Who am I?" was one of the questions at last; and the answer danced to meet it, "I am Zandrie."

Later she seemed to lie on a beach, under a sun that comforted, near water that made no more sound on the sand than slow breathing; and on the water floated bits of a something half known, which, by stretching



out her hand, she could make her own; but if she did that, the sun might burn and the waves threaten, for the floating pieces were bits of a past. For several days she was content to let them stay there; but the temptation to reach for them grew till it had power to trouble her. And it was then, when she needed a friend, that one came. Her second-best friend, she called Mrs. George Deming in after days.

It was she who told Zandrie that she was in a hospital, to which she had been brought from the station six weeks ago. "I think I remember," said Zandrie, daring to reach for one of the floating bits, now that some one was near to save her if the waves threatened; for she felt already that her second-best friend was good at saving.

No one else but the nurse and doctor came to see her; though the Lyndes had written, Mrs. George said, and would come at a day's notice if . . . But Zandrie whispered no.

A week later she had made many of the floating bits her own; yet for some reason the waves had not caught her. Was it possible that she was going to be safe from the past forever? When Gray Deming was by, she almost believed so. "Why are you so good to me?" she asked at last; to which Gray answered, "At first because Julian asked me to, and because you were so nice to Louie; but now — well, because —" But Zandrie did not hear the rest, be-



cause that mention of Julian was the first, and she had known Gray two weeks now.

"He thought it would be so dreadful," Gray went on, "not to have a friend here when you woke up, and your friend Dr. Royce agreed. And so I came."

Zandrie turned her face to the wall. "Where is he?"

"In Boston."

"Julian?"

"Oh! . . . Why, he's left home — all of them — Carter and Mrs. Roswell and the twins. They've gone to the Italian Lakes."

"When will he come back?"

"Not for a long time, I'm afraid. Zandrie dear, — you don't mind my knowing about it all? I just had to, you see, if I was to be any use at all."

But Zandrie did not mind. "Why did he go?"

To make it easier for everybody, Gray said; he had gone as soon as he knew she was getting well. "He went because he's a right good man. In fact, George and I think he's one of the best we know." And a minute later she added, "And we think — and Julian thinks — your friend Dr. Royce is a right good man too. We got to know him while he was here,— while you were sick."

But Zandrie hardly heard that either, being concerned only with the news that Julian had justified her faith; that he was "good" beyond a doubt.



But the next day the past had all come back; and such a dreariness fell upon her, that she begged to be taken to the children's ward. The doctor refused, but a small boy was brought to her, to whom she told half-believed old tales of saints till he forgot about his worthless little legs. And after that, he and one or two others came daily for "more," till she left the hospital and went to the George Demings'.

Gray had told her already that Julian was planning not to come back at all, but at sight of the closed blinds opposite, the full, intolerable meaning of his absence swept upon her for the first time. Forgetting all but the bitterness of bereavement, she asked aloud, "Why did he go?"

Gray, who was picking marigolds in her front yard, dropped them in dismay. "But *dear!* — I thought you understood."

"Because he was good. O yes! But Gray, Gray! Who could count such a marriage as France's and mine, forever? — a service I did n't understand, or I 'd never have made its promises? Never! And who dares say such promises shall bind Julian and me — and France himself — to ruin forever? God himself would laugh at a man who said that."

Gray bent to pick up the marigolds she had dropped. "France hopes to win you yet."

"And *that's* why Julian is gone! . . . But if France can't win me?"

Gray would not meet her eyes. "He knew France



did n't want to give up trying to win you, and had the right to try. He thinks your first duty now is to France. And anyway,— on your own account — he said he would n't marry you even if France wanted to give you up."

"France *could* cancel our marriage, then! — if he wanted. It would be a wicked law, that did n't let us. But why — but why should n't Julian marry me then? . . . The foolish old reason? But that was gone, when I came back to him and he did n't know about France. He was going to marry me right off! He saw aright at last."

"George thinks he did right to go," said Gray. "And George himself is almost always right."

"Not as right as Julian! — except when Julian's blind. He can be so blind! Yet always good. It was good of him to go. Perhaps right too. Yes — to go till the marriage is cancelled, maybe. But he 's wrong — *wrong* — to say my first duty 's to France, because of such a marriage."

"France said he would give you up, if Julian and you both wanted it. But Julian said no; and then he went. . . . Oh, he was sure *you 'd* do the right, in any case; and he just went, to make it easier — "

"For France to do the wrong. For France, who hates us both. He must hate me, to try to keep Julian from me forever. He tried to marry me, knowing that Julian and I . . . *Live with France?* Does Julian think that of me? — that I 'd live with a



man I don't love? — that I 'd marry France *really?* I 'll never even see him again. I 'll not be called by his name: I 'll be Zandrie Donallon, whether the law allows it or not. But it could n't mind! . . . Gray, would *you* have me live with France?"

Then Gray looked her in the eyes, and answered "No."

"But Julian would? . . . Oh, is there a woman in the world who can understand?"

"He only wanted what he thought would be best for you in the end."

"He can't be so blind, and love me."

"He loves you so much that he has all faith in you, — believes you 're as strong as he. And he 's very wonderful and strong himself. And yet, when he was talking with George, the night before he left, George says the tears — "

"Don't!" Zandrie interrupted sharply; and then, "But I 'm glad if it hurt him to be so strong! He did n't need me, so he left me to starve. O wonderful, to be as strong as that! I hate him too! I hate him too!" And from her wild words against him, she fled across the street to the empty garden.

She named it The Garden of Lost Delight. Long ago, for an hour, she had called it Paradise. It seemed fitting that it should be empty, after all, for who might be gardeners of Paradise?

On the ground where she had knelt beside him, she lay now on her face, shaken by desire for his living



presence, at war with pride in him for having justified her faith, and anger because, for all the pride, she could yet not quite understand him. She called him blind, and many a harder name. She would tear the love of him out, she said, and love France instead. But while saying it, the thought came, that if Royce were not living, Julian would surely come back; so, "I wish France would die!" she sobbed. And then she saw that if she tried to live with France, the wish would come again, and that the very will — the need of willing — to shut it out, would poison her peace. And besides, how could she love him, remembering the part that the selfishness of what he called his own love, had played in her undoing? It was then that she cried aloud "Speak to me, Julian!" And when there was no answer, she whispered "Then I choose not to live."

But it was the last time that she made that choice, and Julian's letter, which she found awaiting her across the street, she said afterwards was the reason why.

It was written at Bellagio, on July eleventh.

"My Best Friend:

"If I did wrong to give you up two years ago, I think — yes, I know — that you forgive me because I thought it was for the best. It seemed so wrong for me to marry any one — you of all people! And even now I'd hate to imagine you the wife of a man who could n't run with you in the wind; for you see, when I thought I could have you to



keep, nine weeks ago, I was too drunk with happiness at the wonder of your loving me still — just at the sight of you — to see anything surely aright. Yet when I did what I felt sure was right, two years ago, trouble came to you. You say I made a mistake. So do I, when I think of the trouble. And yet — George Deming says that a man who has done a hard thing because it honestly seemed the right, can't have made a mistake 'in the final sense.' That's the top of faith, I reckon; but if my Best Friend can reach it, I'll pull myself up after her somehow. And you must have reached it, for you said 'If it's a mistake, we'll justify it.' Well, and if we believed that, it would mean — for both of us — the possibility of a life turned from bitterness and failure to a good account. So I will. If you set out to justify my own mistake, shall I lag behind? You'll be patient, and strong to 'do out the duty', whatever it is; and the knowing that, helps me to do my part. It goes without saying that the duty won't be easy. It will be easier for us both, I think, if we don't write. I shall hear of you through the George Demings, whom I wish you could live near, for they are the sort that help. Perhaps they can help your husband to win you. But whatever you do, remember this,— that my belief that you'll somehow 'justify my mistake,' is what turns my own life from utter failure to hope and new purpose. Dear, you *must* understand it — that through you, all the best in my life has come. I don't know how to say it, but it is so that even if you loved some one else better than me, I'd still have you here at the core of me, and be the happier for having known you, even apart from you as I am, losing what many call the best of life. If I could believe that your life has n't been spoiled,—that you feel, like me, that the best isn't lost after all — But you are so great-hearted that I have to believe it of you; and just that keeps me — well, as happy as most men, maybe. Isn't love queer, that way! I reckon it means there's more of it coming in the next world."



CHAPTER XXXIV

WHO MAY BE GARDENERS OF PARADISE

"Stories of fairies and gnomes," said Mrs. Deming, "are unfit even for sick children. If I 'd known those were what Mrs. Royce — I shall call her that, whatever she calls herself — If I 'd known those were what she was going to tell her hospital children, I 'd have urged my son George against it."

And the Ladies' Aid understood this sibylline utterance, having discussed It some twenty-four times in the past twelve months. They knew, for instance, that It stood on the list of philanthropic organizations of a neighboring city, and that the Rev. George Deming had established It himself, by means of a fund which some one — name not published — had given him for that purpose. "No *need* to publish the name," said Mrs. Deming's sister. "But if it was Julian Furness's *idea* — "

"It was n't," said Gray Deming. "It was mine. When I saw what a talent she had for amusing children — even Louie! — it just all came to me at once. And George and Julian just carried it out. And Julian said he 'd have given the money for such a



charity, whether my friend Zandrie had been in question for the position or not. But of course she was just the one, so George — "

"You mean," her mother-in-law interrupted, "that stories of fairies and gnomes, told every day to sick children . . . Well! — all I can say is, that what a man of Julian Furness's sterling qualities — and my son George — can find to admire in that flighty young woman — "

" And my husband! " Mrs. Summers interrupted.

" And *her* husband! " Mrs. Deming's sister interrupted Mrs. Summers. " Though to be sure, it looks now as of Dr. Royce — "

" Please, Myra, let me finish my sentences," said Mrs. Deming. "I was saying — I 've always said — that Dr. Royce was much to be pitied — "

" Because he married her? — or because, having married her, he could n't have her? — or because, now that he does n't want to have her, he 's getting a divorce? I think it was perfectly dog-in-the-manger-ish not to get it sooner, especially as it was so easy."

" If you would let me finish," Mrs. Deming began patiently — But the unforeseen and tempestuous entrance of Zandrie almost finished Mrs. Deming herself.

Zandrie got Gray out into the hall. " Any letter this week? "



Gray shook her head. "You did n't desert your poor sick kiddies just to ask — "

"O dear no!" Zandrie had her arms about her and was laughing. "And I 'll tell them about the darlingest, hunchiest goblin tomorrow. . . . Gray! — what was the really real reason why Julian went? "

"Why — why, because you and Dr. Royce — "

"Got married once, by a wedding service and promises I did n't even understand. No more married than that. No; and the realest reason was just that Julian 's a most stupid man, and thought, because France never rode horseback too fast on an icy road — he honestly thought France would make me a better husband! So he was bound to give him every chance. There may have been other reasons at the time, too. But now that France finds he absolutely can't have me ever — Now that Julian knows *he 's* not keeping us apart, and France *wants* to give up trying — is all out of patience — for I 've never even let him see me, you know, this year and a half — "

It was wonderful to see, how Gray's eyes were shining; but what she said was "Poor France."

"Pity France? Well, yes! — because he never could know — what Julian and I know,— not even when he marries some one else. And think how miserable he 'd have been with me! It takes an arrogant, terrible man like Julian, to keep me in order.



And Gray, darling! Now that there 's no possible good reason . . . Oh, I 've thought a lot, this year and a half, about right and wrong. Think of that! And I know absolutely and forever that it would have been wrong — *wrong* — to have lived with France. We never were really married in any way, and never could be married in heart. And I know there 's no wrong in cancelling such a no-marriage. But I 've waited patiently for France to lose patience, because Julian wanted me to. And meanwhile . . ."

"Well?" said Gray.

"I 've made the strangest discoveries! Remember what George said — that the best flowers grew in the Garden of Lost Delight?"

"Of course I remember what George says."

"Well, he was mistaken! — though Julian himself thought he was right — I know that from his letter of a year and half ago. But the strange thing is, the *best* flowers grow in a Place beyond the Garden. Only, you have to go through the Garden to get to it. And you can't possibly get to it even then, unless you've seen the flowers in the Garden, and seen that they 're very fair, and picked them to keep. They're your passport to the Place beyond the Garden. And Julian has picked them all. But could his dear, great soul be less great for having the flowers of its delight at last? Gray darling, are n't you proud to know such a man?"



"Very proud."

"Oh, I love you! . . . And what if a man like that loved you?"

"George *does,*" said his loyal wife.

Zandrie laughed. "I 'm glad you don't quite understand Julian. And that 's another queer thing — that if we 'd had each other any sooner than right now, I should n't have understood him myself. He *thinks,* you see; and I 'd have made him quite unhappy if I could n't do it sometimes too. It 's what I 've been doing this whole year and a half! — when I have n't been raging with impatience. It 's lucky he made me leave him — blind that he was! — three years and a half ago. But even then, I never began to understand him till I left him myself, a year and a half ago. No matter how mistaken, you see, he was always good,— and yet not mistaken! Oh, I see it all, at last! It 's one of the flowers I 've picked for my passport. And another flower —"

"Well?" said Gray.

"I 've made myself not hate and despise France,— because Julian did n't. But even then, there 's no telling how I 'd have scrambled after him through the Garden without the help of hope. And now — and now . . . I 'll never tease him to marry me, again; but — I 've engaged a substitute for six months, and I shan't have money enough to get back! I 'm going to see him — his very self — his very self — in Lausanne, two weeks from to-day. I 'm going



to make him understand *me* at last,— that I'm all grown up and know my own need. He could n't be so arrogant as to choose for me still! He stood aside to let me run in the wind with a man I did n't love. Yet the very first day I saw Julian, he carried my heart up a mountain. What do men think we want? He would n't listen, when I told him. But he 'll not wrong me so again. . . . Two whole weeks, Gray! . . . But they 'll pass — they 'll pass. And then — I 'll show him where the perfect flowers grow."

THE END

